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FEBRUARY 2023

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Are we ready TO BEGIN?

Much like a crisp first page in a fresh notebook, I've always loved the start of a new year. I generally do Dry January – by the end of December I'm ready for it – but that's about all the pressure I put on myself. I prefer to think of these early months as a chance to reset – to give my body the attention, nutrition and exercise it craves to feel good. And it doesn't have to be hard work. Just take a look at our recipes for food that's as delicious as it's healthy, and our expert advice on gentle exercise to boost energy (p72).

New year is also a good time for a beauty check-up. Is your skin getting the care it deserves? Does your hair need some TLC? Have you been wearing the same make-up for years? Don't worry, woman&home has you covered. Turn to p53 for the latest trends, tricks and products for 2023.

Let's be honest, the best resolution you can make is to devote a little more time to yourself. Whether that's understanding what fuel you need, knowing the best ways to move your body or learning how to cope with the pressures of life, it pays to do your research. And that starts here…

Michelle

MICHELLE HATHER
Editor, Feel Good You
michelle.hather@futurenet.com

PS I'd love to hear how we can help you to Feel Good. Email me at the above address and look out for our next issue in supermarkets and newsagents from 9 March.

3 GREAT THINGS TO TRY THIS ISSUE…

Discover how to improve your sleep – for good (p22)

Find ways to soothe sensitive, stressed-out skin (p56)

Banish the winter blues with a trip to sunny Barbados (p126)

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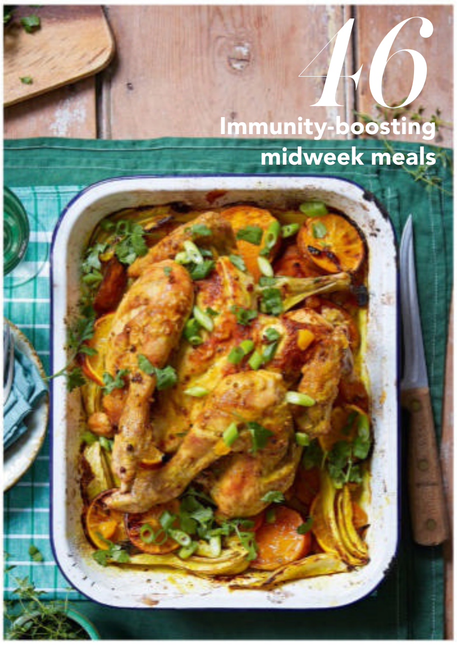

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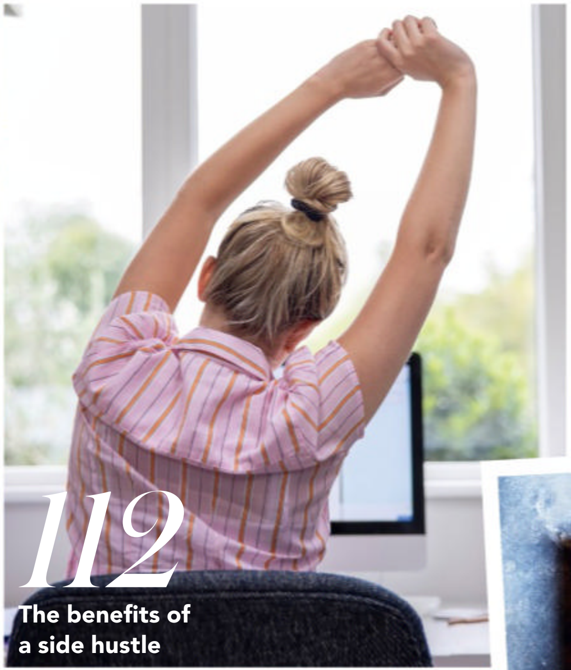

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A TOUCH OF BLUSH

Sweeten up your style with rich berry tones, winter's juiciest colour trend

PRINT PERFECTION
Jumper, £59.50, sizes 6-18, oliverbonas.com

SUPPORTING ACT
Sports bra, £35, sizes xs-6xl, Girlfriend Collective at thesportsedit.com

Made using recycled water bottles

ALL SET
Bra, £39, sizes, 28DD-44E, and briefs, £19, sizes xs-xxxl, gossard.com

CULT CLASSIC
White Musk Flora Body Lotion, £12, thebodyshop.com

THE BODY SHOP
SCENTED BODY LOTION
LOTION POUR LE CORPS
WHITE MUSK
FLORA
VEGAN
250 ml (8.4 US FL OZ)

GET THE GLOW
Pixi Glow Tonic, £18, boots.com

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skintreats
Glow Tonic

FUN FINISHES
Earrings, £19, accessorize.com

Gold plated

THINK PINK
Running top, £38, sizes xs-xl, adidas.co.uk

GET ORGANISED
Brush pot, £40, Bridie Hall at libertylondon.com

SECOND SKIN
Shorts, £56, sizes xs-l, Varley at selfridges.com

SITTING PRETTY
Embroidered cushion, £68.99,
anna-nina.nl

Internal adjustable strap

BEAT THE CHILL
Hat, £39.99,
Barts at
johnlewis.com

SOLE MATES
Trainers, £150, shoethebear.co.uk

BOTTOMS UP!
The Lakes Pink Grapefruit Gin, 70cl, £34, lakesdistillery.com

THE LAKES GIN
PINK GRAPEFRUIT
70cl ALC 46% VOL

FEELING FRUITY
Deliciously Ella Fruity Bircher Muesli, 400g, £4.15, planetorganic.com

deliciously ella
fruity bircher muesli
with apple, raspberry & instantly creamy oats
100% plant-based

LADIES WHO LOUNGE
Pyjama set, £79, sizes s-l, phase-eight.com

DON'T SWEAT IT
Sweatshirt, £27.50, sizes 6-24, Goodmove at marksandspencer.com

Charbonnel et Walker
Milk
Marc de Champagne
Truffles
Net Wt. 34g (1.2oz)

TASTE OF LUXURY
Milk Marc De Champagne Truffles, £7.50, charbonnel.co.uk

WASH & GO
Washbag, £20, sweatybetty.com

COMPILED BY ELOISA JOHNSON

What's healthy RIGHT NOW?

All the latest news, views and new year buys

Everyone's talking about...

LISTENING TO MUSIC MAY STOP COMFORT EATING

During a study by De Montfort University in Leicester, participants were asked to recall sad memories before listening to pre-selected music, or being left in silence, before taking part in a snack test. The result? Women ate roughly a third less after listening to music that gave emotional support. Scientists believe this is due to the release of happy hormones when hearing soothing sounds, the same hormones that are released when we eat our favourite comfort foods.

NIGHTMARES COULD MEAN PARKINSON'S RISK

If you're waking up at least once a week due to bad dreams, it might be an early warning sign for Parkinson's, according to research by Birmingham University. Findings showed that people experiencing one nightmare a week were three times more likely to develop the disease. Scientists say it's down to the damage Parkinson's does to parts of the brain that regulate emotions during sleep.

Fast walking is more important than step count

You might not need to aim for 10,000 steps a day* – as long as you're walking at a quick pace. Power walking can lower your risk for chronic diseases, such as Type 2 diabetes by 62%. However, you should still be aiming for over 7,000 to reap the health benefits. If you can easily hold a conversation while walking, you may be going too slow.

RAISE A GLASS

Off the booze for a health kick? You can still enjoy some fizz with Sainsbury's Alcohol Free Sparkling Wine (£3 for 75cl, Sainsbury's). And, it's only 33 calories!

73% of women think perimenopause is not suitably represented and acknowledged by society**.

Beat winter bugs

Fend off seasonal infections with Pukka Herbs' new Elderberry Syrup (£14.99, pukkaherbs.com). The blend of elderberry juice, acacia honey and thyme will help to boost the immune system.

IT'S A FACT over three in 10 Brits don't know how or where they can receive a cholesterol test,

Fast walking is more important than your step count, make sure you up your pace when you can.

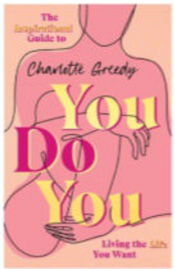
THREE OF THE BEST SELF-IMPROVEMENT BOOKS

Begin 2023 the right way with these helpful guides...

My
MANIFESTATION
Journal

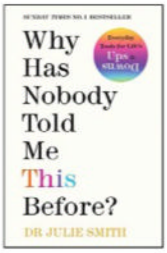
MY MANIFESTATION JOURNAL BY ASTRID CARVEL (£10.99, SUMMERSDALE PUBLISHERS)

Set your positive intentions for the new year ahead with this helpful guide. It's packed with practical tips.


The Inspirational Guide to
Charlotte Greedy
You Do You
Living the Life You Want

YOU DO YOU: THE INSPIRATIONAL GUIDE TO GETTING THE LIFE YOU WANT BY CHARLOTTE GREEDY (£16.99, BANTAM PRESS)***

With real-life experiences, Charlotte will help you to make a fresh start.


Why Has Nobody Told Me This Before?
DR JULIE SMITH

WHY HAS NOBODY TOLD ME THIS BEFORE? BY DR JULIE SMITH (£8, MICHAEL JOSEPH)

Take care of your mental health with these bite-size tips on everything from how to manage anxiety to coping with grief.

which has increased +6% year on year****. (FYI, just see your GP for a free one)

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. *JAMA INTERNAL MEDICINE AND JAMA NEUROLOGY. **'THE FUTURE OF PERIMENOPAUSE', REPORT. ***TITLE RELEASED 12 JANUARY. ****FLORA PROACTIV. WORDS: ROSE GOODMAN. PHOTOS: YELLOW IMAGES, GETTY.

Wellbeing TRENDS *to try in* 2023

Expect to see more of these this year

1

WORKPLACE WELLBEING

For many, workplaces are changing for the better. 'It's going to be a big year for workplace wellness in 2023. We're out the other side of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis is in full force,' says clinical psychologist Dr Jenna Vyas-Lee, co-founder of koveminds.com. 'Employees are demanding a better work-life balance, and employers are catching up. I think holistic wellness packages, including looking after people's finances and mental health, will trend upwards.'

And there's good news for menopausal women. Once largely ignored, this life stage is now being given the attention it deserves. 'Employers are looking at the effect of symptoms on work, and the effect of the workplace on symptoms, resulting in the implementation of menopause policies and the appointing of menopause champions,' says health promotion specialist Norma Goldman, founder of menopause-exchange.co.uk. 'To help, workplaces are looking into controlling heating, ventilation and air-conditioning, fans, open offices, material in uniforms, flexible working policies and the availability of toilets.'

2

The collagen craze continues

From soothing eye wands to supplements; serums to sea buckthorn, there are numerous ways to access this valuable protein, which helps maintain skin, brain, gut and bone health (among others). Here are some of our favourites:

✢ **HEATED EYE WAND:** A health and beauty treatment in one, this game-changing device uses red LED light – clinically proven to boost collagen production – and heat to relieve dry eyes (£60, peepclub.com).

✢ **SEA BUCKTHORN:** Peep Club also offers an Instant Relief Eye Spray (£15), containing sea buckthorn to support the delicate eye area and alleviate sore eyes. One study* of participants aged 50-70 who applied sea buckthorn oil showed it increased cutaneous thickness, suggesting an improvement in collagen synthesis, says optometrist Nicola Alexander-Cross. Or take Sea Buckthorn supplements to nourish from the inside out (£16.95 for 60 capsules, healthspan.co.uk).

✢ **YOUR BEAUTY COLLAGEN:** Described as collagen supplements without the price tag, the capsules and powders from Your Good Health Co. (developed with Superdrug) start from just £12.99.

✢**SKIN REPUBLIC COLLAGEN 2% SERUM:** This light, hydrating serum glides onto the skin, smoothing out wrinkles while renewing cells. Contains SPF15, too (£14.99, theskinrepublic.co.uk).

‘Employees are demanding a better work-life balance’

3

BLUE IS THE NEW GREEN

It's not just greenery that's good for us – a recent study** found that children who spend time near (or in) water have better mental health as adults. And water benefits everyone. ‘Blue spaces are good for us in three ways,’ says Dr Catherine Kelly, author of ***Blue Spaces: How and Why Water Can Make You Feel Better* (£14.99, Welbeck Balance).** ‘Physically – when we walk beside them, swim, surf or paddleboard, our exercise and endorphins benefits increase. Psychologically, the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol decrease in blue spaces as our breath and brains quieten, plus new research shows that cold water immersion can help with inflammatory conditions, from digestive problems to depression. And, finally, socially – when we're in blue spaces with others, our sense of belonging and community increases.’ You don't need a large body of water to benefit – a pond, fountain or even a bath will do.

4

Quiet quitting skincare

If some of us are ‘quiet quitting’ jobs, why not extend this to our skincare routines? ‘A minimalist routine saves time and money, less products are more sustainable, and it's better for the skin,’ says Dr Colette Haydon, founder of ‘less is more advanced skincare’ brand lixirskin.co.uk. ‘Layering too many products with active ingredients that work on different metabolic pathways confuses the skin,’ she says. Try Universal Emulsion (£29, lixirskin.co.uk) – a moisturiser, night cream and serum all in one. >>

5 *Microbiome meals*

In just five years, Google searches for 'gut health' increased by 1,000%. Meanwhile, #guttok has almost 700 million views on TikTok. The age of the microbiome meal is here.

'A microbiome meal is one that's been carefully planned to incorporate gut-health superfoods,' explains Dr Caitlin Hall, chief dietitian at Myota (hellomyota.com), which provides fibre mixes that support gut microbiome. 'When digested, these ingredients help bacteria produce short chain fatty acids (SCFAs), which work to stabilise hormones, reduce bloating and inflammation, and improve mood.'

For a happier, healthier you, consider taking a supplement, or eat more probiotic foods (eg, kombucha, miso, natural yogurt, sourdough) and prebiotic foods (eg, chicory root, fruit, legumes, wholegrains).

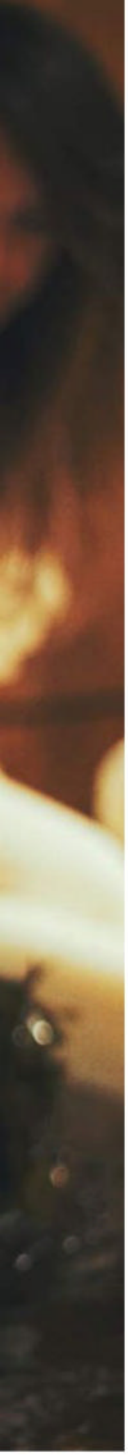
6 SEAWEED SKINCARE

Irish people have bathed in seaweed for centuries, and now more skincare brands and spas are including this intensely nourishing ingredient into their products and treatments

'Seaweed is a highly-concentrated version of the sea, with a full spectrum of minerals, vitamins and other bioactive compounds not found anywhere else, which can be particularly beneficial in skincare,' explains Mark Walton, co-founder of VOYA, which makes scientifically-proven seaweed-based skincare. Seaweed purifies and balances the ocean and does the same for your body, he says, drawing out toxins and excess fluid and replacing them with depleted minerals, particularly potassium and iodine. Add Lazy Days Detoxifying Seaweed (£22, voya.ie) to a hot bath to increase circulation and moisturise your skin. Afterwards, you can allow to dry and reuse in another bath, or you can use the seaweed to fertilise your plants.

Alternatively, treat your feet to The Retreat Spa's Walking on Sunshine seaweed foot bath at The Londoner (thelondoner.com/the-retreat), an indulgent treatment that both detoxifies and rejuvenates.

*JOURNAL OF APPLIED COSMETOLOGY. **JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY. WORDS: DEBRA WATERS. PHOTOS (POSED BY MODELS): GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. CHECK WITH YOUR GP OR MEDICAL EXPERT. BEFORE TAKING NEW SUPPLEMENTS



7

BESPOKE MENOPAUSE CARE

Suffering alone through the menopause is becoming less common, as women become more aware of their options. 'Women want to be informed of where they are along their menopause journey, as well as how they can relieve life-changing symptoms,' says Tania Adib, consultant gynaecologist at The Lister Hospital, London. 'Bespoke menopause plans offer this and give choice on how to manage the menopause through hormone-replacement therapy, supplements, lifestyle and nutrition advice, or alternative methods.'

Bupa is one such provider of this much-needed service. 'We offer the menopause plan in our health clinics,' says Dr Samantha Wild, women's health lead at Bupa Health Clinics. 'Many customers coming for a health assessment were experiencing symptoms such as anxiety and low mood and weren't sure why. People recognise hot flushes but aren't aware of how many symptoms there are, and how they can affect them,' she explains. The Bupa menopause plan (£250) includes a 45-minute appointment with a menopause-trained GP, a personalised plan, letter for your NHS GP and prescription if needed, or an onwards referral.

8

Longevity wellness

The year 2023 isn't just about living well, it's about living longer. 'The longevity market has skyrocketed – $4.5 billion was invested in 2022 alone,' says GlycanAge's CEO Nikolina Lauc. So, how can you help yourself? One option is a biological age test such as GlycanAge (£289, price plan available). This clever blood test evaluates your immune system and any inflammation in the body to determine your biological age (as opposed to your chronological age), and make positive changes, if necessary.

A new breed of supplements also has the potential to extend our lives. 'At the core of the longevity movement is a family of seven proteins called sirtuins,' says Ed van Harmelen, founder of Youth & Earth. 'They're found in plants and fruit high in polyphenols and have been shown to extend lifespan and health.' Check out youthandearth.com for a range of anti- and healthy-ageing supplements.

9

Healing holidays

Wellness breaks are increasingly focused on personal growth, with UK-based retreats being more sustainable and less pricey. Here are two you'll love:

✢ **To rebalance body and soul: Weleda Wellness**

On these three-day retreats, guests are treated to organic food; wellness talks and workshops about skincare, health and wellbeing; absorbing walks in nature and morning yoga classes. The atmosphere is uplifting and supportive. **Next retreat: 31 March-3 April 2023, Peak District (from £850, weleda.co.uk/weleda-wellness-retreat).**

✢ **For the menopausal: Menoheaven**

'Our retreats offer an opportunity to connect with others to discover the knowledge and strength needed to work through the momentous changes the menopause brings,' explains founder Tania Smith. 'Women leave feeling well-informed, nurtured, more energised and optimistic.' **Next retreat: 23-25 May 2023, East Sussex (from £525, mamaheaven.org/menoheaven).**

Supplements... but not as we know them

10

Gone are the days when you have to pop a pill the size of your thumbnail – the supplements of today won't make you wince as you try to swallow them down. You can now find your vitamins and pain relief in chocolates, fizzy drinks and patches. Try these:

✢ **Chocolate vitamins:** A daily delicious treat with no funny aftertaste, these one-of-a-kind supplements are suitable for pregnant or menstruating women, or for those in need of an iron boost (from £9.99, domevitamins.com).

✢ **Drink your greens:** Now available in the UK, more than 100 million of these nutrient-packed effervescent tablets have already been sold in America. 8Greens come in three flavours and contain dehydrated, super-nutritious aloe vera, barley grass, blue-green algae, chlorella, kale, wheatgrass, spinach and spirulina. Add water for a sparkling drink full of goodness (£14 per tube of 10 tablets, uk.8greens.com).

✢ **CBD patches:** Used for pain relief and for reducing anxiety, these handy little patches work their magic almost instantly and last for 24 hours (from £15.99, hapihemp.co.uk). They slowly and steadily release CBD into your system transdermally (through the skin). Believe us, they work!

The joy of a TICK LIST

Ever heard of a reverse bucket list? Boost your confidence and plan ahead by looking at what you've already achieved

It's the start of a new year, so naturally we're looking ahead. Some of us might even have written a to-do or bucket list of places to visit or challenges to attempt in 2023. But perhaps it's time to dip into that bucket. This exercise, known as a reverse bucket list, not only promotes contentment in the present, it also helps you get the most out of your future.

'A reverse bucket list is reflective. It encourages you to celebrate your accomplishments, rather than getting bogged down in things that you think you ought to have done but haven't yet,' says positive psychology coach Lynne Dorling, author of *Ageing Rewired: How to Flourish in Later Life* (£14.99, Troubador). Here's how to get started.

FRESH PERSPECTIVE

When we're young, a standard bucket list can be very motivating, as we have lots of big dreams and ample time to accomplish them. Then, as we age, we gain life experience and our circumstances change – perhaps we have caring responsibilities or health concerns that limit our ability to travel. We tend to become more realistic and a forward-looking list loses some of its appeal. This is where the reverse bucket list comes in.

'It shifts your mindset from a pessimistic "I can't" to an optimistic "I can", because it will show you how much you have already done,' says life coach Phil Drinkwater (phildrinkwater.coach). 'It makes you feel more sure of your ability to achieve in the future.'

This change in perspective may also make you feel grateful for any opportunities you have had, and gratitude is associated with increased happiness and motivation for self-improvement, according to research*.

Finally, a reverse bucket list is a deep dive into the past, so don't be surprised if it throws up things you haven't thought about in years. 'We tend to be very good at goal-setting, and not so good at appreciating and savouring life,' says Lynne. Precious memories shouldn't be left to gather dust in your archives – relive them and share the joy with anyone else involved.

GET STUCK IN

'One way to structure your reverse bucket list is to take it decade by decade,' says Lynne. Start with what you achieved before you were 10 years old and continue from there. Alternatively, you could use significant life events, such as moving home, having children or changing career, to bookend each chapter.

Take a broad view of your life and consider all your different roles – whether that's as a parent, daughter, student, sportswoman, entrepreneur, employee and/or volunteer. 'Look out for times when you've demonstrated traits such as adaptability, resilience, proactivity and connectivity, which you might not typically count as achievements,' says Lynne. These softer skills should be celebrated as much as any material successes, if not more so.

Depending on how you like to work, you could:

+ **WRITE A JOURNAL**
Remember this is for your eyes only, 'so you can include everything you're secretly proud of, too,' says Lynne.

+ **RECORD AN AUDIO DIARY**
This one could work well if you want to buddy up and swap stories with a friend. 'As long as you choose carefully and approach the exercise in a positive and affirming way, an objective viewpoint can help to reveal strengths you wouldn't have acknowledged yourself,' says Lynne.

+ **MAKE A VISION BOARD**
'If you've ever done this to motivate yourself to achieve something in the future, it could be just as powerful in reverse,' says Lynne. Create a collage from old photographs and snippets from memory boxes.

REFLECTING ON HARD TIMES

Looking back can be difficult if you have particular regrets or painful memories. Whether it's loss, failure or missed opportunities because of illness or even lockdown, 'if you can identify a lesson or positive outcome, the difficult event or period of time could still be well worth delving into,' says Lynne.

With the benefit of hindsight, this might be easier than you think. 'It's not about looking at the past through rose-coloured glasses, it's about reframing,' says Lynne. 'Think of the time when things didn't work out as you planned and ask yourself if there was a silver lining. For example you might say "If X hadn't happened, then Y wouldn't have happened".' It may have led you to meet someone or travel somewhere new, for example.

NOW LOOK AHEAD

Throughout the process, you will learn a lot about yourself: what you can do and what makes you light up. 'Underline the highlights in your reverse bucket list – these are the experiences or achievements that speak to you the loudest,' says Lynne. Now you have clarity on the kinds of people, places and purposes that feed your soul.

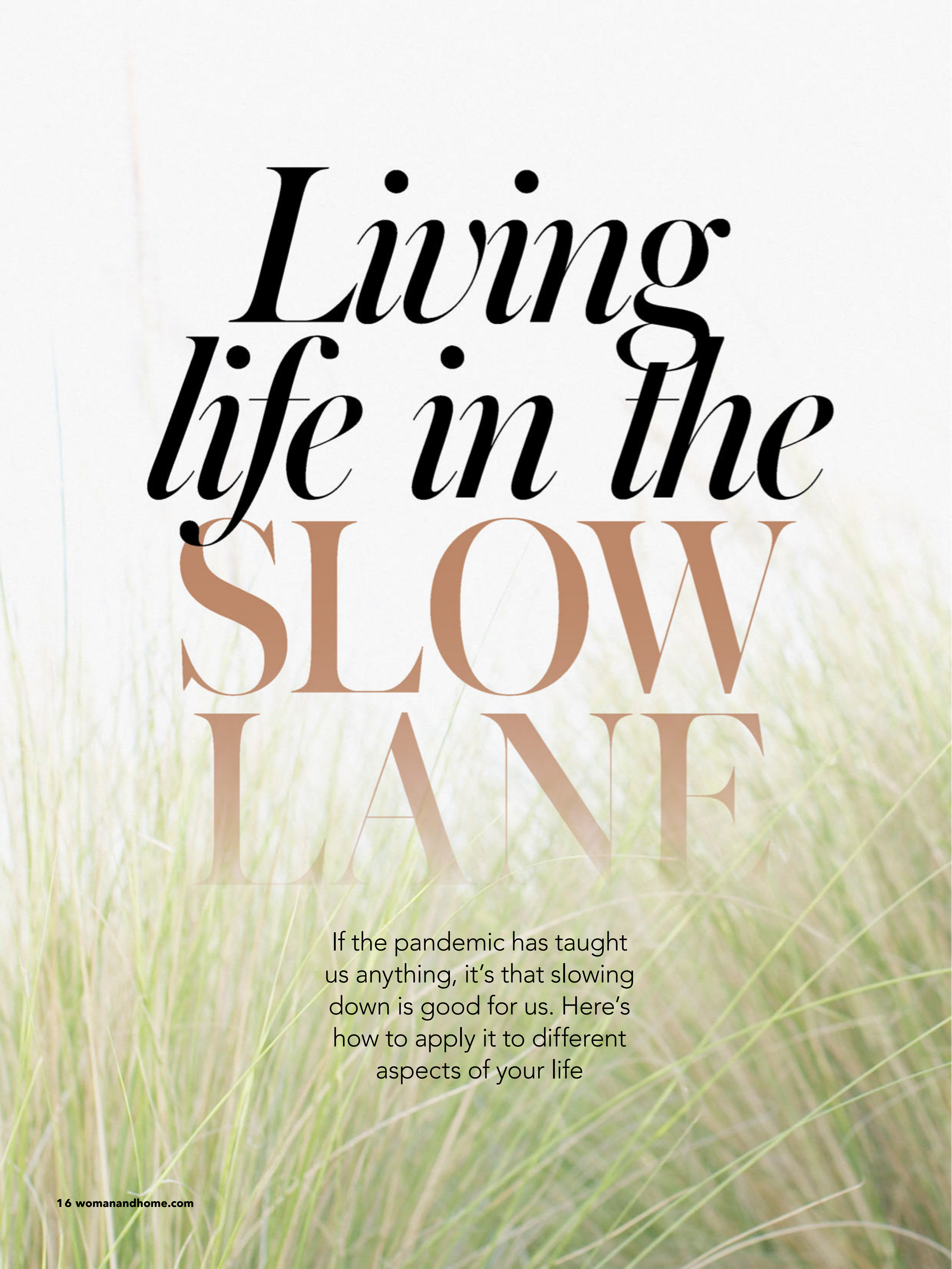
DRAWING A BLANK?

Feel like you're boasting? 'You may have been taught as a child not to celebrate your victories,' adds Phil. 'If this is the case, look at this exercise through the lens of contentment rather than pride.'

'As a result, you can be more selective about what you should invest your time and energy in,' says Lynne. Start editing your forward-looking list. You'll have full confidence in your choices and will enjoy a greater number of truly meaningful and worthwhile moments in the months and years to come.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. PHOTOS: GETTY. WORDS: JENNY ROWE. *THE SCIENCE OF GRATITUDE REPORT BY THE GREATER GOOD SCIENCE CENTER AT UC BERKELEY.

Living life in the SLOW LANE



If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that slowing down is good for us. Here's how to apply it to different aspects of your life

xxxxxxxx

We are a stressed nation – one report* found that 74% of UK adults feel overwhelmed, and that was before the Covid pandemic. Stress contributes to unhealthy lifestyle choices and disease – and it makes us miserable. We need a new approach, and if the five million hashtags on Instagram are anything to go by, 'slow living' is the mindset we're craving.

'It's my suspicion that we reach a threshold of needing and wanting to slow down,' says eco-psychotherapist Dr Ruth Allen, author of *Grounded: How Connection With Nature Can Improve Our Mental and Physical Wellbeing* (£16.99, Welbeck Publishing). 'It's often precipitated by a period of stress or busyness that we feel the effects of more than ever. Or by a big loss, or by our body saying "No" and giving us a bunch of symptoms that are hard to ignore.'

Yet it can take getting perilously close to burnout before we act – why is this? 'As a society we've glorified being busy,' says Marjolyn Poutsma, founder of theslowlivingguide.co.uk. 'We need to redefine our definition of success – we shouldn't always strive for more, bigger, faster, but make time for the things that matter most to us.'

Slow living is associated with the wellness trend, but while wellness often comes with a pricetag (Brits are predicted to spend £487 per head, annually, on it**) slowing down costs us little, but has the potential to hugely enrich our lives. It's about perspective. 'The myth around slow living is that it's a luxury lifestyle to be enjoyed by the few who have abundant time or financial means,' says Marjolyn. 'That's not true. It's a state of mind rather than a lifestyle action plan, about being mindful and having an attitude of gratitude. When you pay attention to what gives you joy, when you feel connected to people, when you focus on what you have instead of what you have not, you're likely to feel more confident, positive and fulfilled.' You don't need to make huge changes, she adds. Try these simple steps for starters:

- Take some deep breaths in fresh air.
- Eat a home-cooked meal at a nicely set table.
- Engage in a slow activity like reading or knitting, even if it's just for 15 minutes.
- Be grateful for three different things each day.

Slowing down doesn't mean stopping; it's about finding moments to feel at one with yourself and the world. 'I'd encourage everyone to think about how they can bring more "time balance" to their lives,' advises Dr Allen. 'If the whole lot cannot be slowed, where are the priorities? What is your body telling you? When is it that you feel the fast pace the most? Start there. Do one job at a time. Reduce the "must dos". Get outside and move to a different rhythm. Make this essential.'

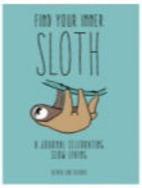
Fancy exercising 'slow'? Then turn to p72.

NEED A HELPING HAND?

- **READ: Seeking Slow: Reclaim Moments of Calm in Your Day by Melanie Barnes (£9.99, Rock Point)**

SEEKING SLOW
RECLAIM MOMENTS OF CALM IN YOUR DAY
MELANIE BARNES

- **WRITE: Find Your Inner Sloth: A Journal Celebrating Slow Living (£9.99, White Lion)**



- **MAKE: Unwind with a slow stitching kit (£43, wattleandloop.com)**

WORDS: DEBRA WATERS. PHOTOS: GETTY. *2018 REPORT COMMISSIONED BY THE MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION. **GLOBALDATA. ***STUDY COMMISSIONED BY UBER EATS. FIND ITS MINDFUL MOUTHFUL AUDIO GUIDE ON APPLE MUSIC AND SPOTIFY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP.

How to slow down

SLOW... FOOD

Food is fundamental to existence yet, according to one study***, 74% of us partake in mindless eating habits, such as fridge-raiding. But if we pay attention to food – and allow our senses to engage with what we're consuming – it can relieve stress, aid digestion and prevent over-eating.

Reconnecting with what we eat is at the heart of Slow Food, a global movement that promotes eating well. 'Food should be about love, sense of place, culture, memories,' says Shane Holland, executive chair of Slow Food UK. Eating is essential to wellbeing, so it makes sense to eat what sustains us and our environment. Try a few simple recipes – the fewer, yet more natural, ingredients the better.

'The act of cooking will slow you down, save money, and if you seek out local producers help protect your local landscape,' adds Shane. Spend a leisurely afternoon baking or making preserves, and share your knowledge. Work for food and it will work for you.

SLOW... HOBBIES

Hobbies should be pleasurable distractions. Crafts, in particular, are beneficial. They stimulate the relaxation response – a restful state that helps lower blood pressure, heart rate and stress hormones. Take slow stitching, for example. 'Slow stitching is a terrific mindful activity that can be done by almost anyone, anywhere. It forces you to be in the moment,' says Kylie Wright, founder of Wattle & Loop.

Bronwen Shepherd, who runs slow stitching breaks in Italy (textileholidaysitaly.com), agrees. 'A needle and thread and some scraps of fabric require just enough concentration to let go of worries,' she explains. 'If you focus on the process of pushing the needle into the fabric, then pulling the needle out slowly and evenly, you'll find that your racing mind will settle.'

Here's how to slow stitch:

✢ Get a needle and thread and some coloured fabric scraps, plus an old pillowcase to stitch on to.
✢ Stitch them on to the background fabric, using a running stitch.
✢ Add texture – overlap stitches, fold areas to reveal the reverse. Don't think of designs, just stitch.

SLOW... TRAVELLING

Remember the saying 'Life is about the journey, not the destination'? This applies to slow travel, too.

Most people fly to their holiday, missing out on much of the country and only going where tourists are,' says Sarah Nash, founder of slow-travel.uk. 'Instead, travel overground by train, bike or boat – you'll encounter people who aren't there to service your tourist needs, they're people living real lives.'

Slow travel also helps us respect others and the environment. 'Tourism is a destructive industry,' adds Sarah. 'Visitors cause damage in terms of pricing locals out of their own areas, and local roads and public transport are filled with tourists.' Travellers, she advises, should always be mindful that they're holidaying in someone else's home.

Here's how to be a slow traveller, says Sarah:

✢ Stay in independently owned places where you'll be appreciated.
✢ Avoid main tourist sites (or visit them off-season or out of hours) and go off the beaten path.
✢ Avoid package holidays – not only do you save money but you spread your tourist wealth around.
✢ Be aware of your environmental impact. Don't leave rusting lovelocks on bridges or throw coins in streams.

'NOT MANY PEOPLE ARE BRAVE ENOUGH TO CHANGE'

Here's how Emma Fullwood, 45, found her 'slow':

'I was always busy. I saw relaxation as boring and resting as lazy. Then suddenly life felt hard. As an exercise instructor I told clients to listen to their bodies, yet I never really knew what this meant. I blamed hormones, I found myself searching for drugs to get me back to normal, but after trialling different products I realised that being busy makes me feel anxious and drained. I decided to honour the message my body was giving me and switch lanes from the exhausted woman who felt overwhelmed to running a business in feminine energy.

I've learned that not many people are brave enough to slow down – we base our self-worth on productivity. We often see burnout as needing medical attention but what if we got there beforehand, what if people acknowledged they need to do less to feel better? So I work with women who feel stuck and lead them into realising simple changes to their lives can elevate how they feel, that doing less is available to them and that less is actually more. Many of my clients work hard yet what they really crave is peace, space, time and pleasure.

My advice? Read a book over random phone scrolling; ditch alcohol if you're feeling anxious or tired; learn to say no; and set boundaries. I get up early and move my body for 15 minutes and do breath work. I set aside "me" time. I discovered many things about myself by slowing down – now I honour rest. I choose "being" over "doing" and it's changed my life.'

✢ Find Emma on Instagram @the_emmafullwood

NEVER FORGET!

Do you struggle to recall words or forget important dates? These lifestyle tweaks can make a difference

KEYS?
LIGHTS?
WINDOWS?
WALLET?
STOVE?
PHONE?

Hunting for your reading glasses only to realise they're already on your head is frustrating, and we've all marched purposefully from one room to another – instantly forgetting why we're there. Most people experience memory lapses with age, but what's the difference between 'normal' forgetfulness and possible dementia? Our experts have the answers, with tips to give your brain a boost.

TAKE YOUR TIME

Worried that you're losing your judgement? Simply slowing down when making a decision can help. Consider all your options carefully, and don't be afraid to ask the opinion of trusted friends and family members.

✢ WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If you notice that you're putting odd combinations of clothing together or dressing inappropriately for the weather or occasion – and if you start acting impulsively.

GET ORGANISED

'It's a common sign of ageing to misplace things from time to time and to have to retrace your steps to find them,' says Dr Tim Beanland, head of knowledge management at care and research charity Alzheimer's Society. Having particular places to keep things like keys, such as a hook or basket by the door, or a specific pocket in your handbag, can help.

✢ WHEN TO SEEK HELP

'If you start putting objects in odd places – such as placing your keys in the bathroom cabinet,' says Dr Beanland.

WRITE THINGS DOWN

Are you scatter-brained about routine tasks – especially when busy and stressed? Have an ongoing list to keep track of what you need to do, and put dates and times of appointments on the calendar instead of relying on your memory.

✢ WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Talk to your GP if you no longer remember a recipe you've known off by heart for years, or are getting lost along familiar routes when doing errands.

STAY SOCIABLE

Accept invitations to see friends and family, and continue to make plans for get-togethers, to keep your brain firing. Being reluctant to socialise, or feeling irritable when your routine is disrupted, is something we all experience from time to time, says Dr Beanland.

✢ WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Becoming withdrawn, and losing all interest in work, friends or hobbies is a cause for concern, says Dr Beanland. 'Getting unusually anxious or upset around people you should feel comfortable with is also a worry.'

MAKE USE OF THE ALPHABET TRICK

Experiencing tip-of-the-tongue problems when searching for a word? Going through your A-Z can trigger the name or word you're reaching for.

✢ WHEN TO SEEK HELP

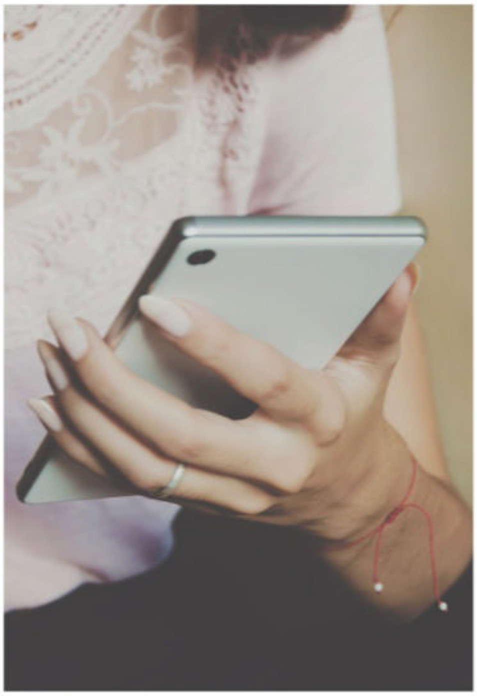
If being unable to find the right words and having difficulty making yourself understood means you're struggling to hold a conversation.

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR MEMORY?

Speak to your GP. They may refer you for dementia tests, or can test for other treatable conditions such as depression, vitamin B12 deficiency, and thyroid and vascular problems, which can cause similar symptoms. For more information, go to alzheimers.org.uk.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. PHOTO: GETTY

'An app saved my MENTAL HEALTH'



When Claire Street, 52, began to feel low and overwhelmed, she tried self-therapy from her phone

I began to struggle with negative thoughts and feelings in my early 40s after a series of major life events that all seemed to happen at once. My mum died, which was a huge bereavement, I had a total hysterectomy that knocked me sideways, and I relocated to look after my elderly grandmother with dementia. I left my home town, all my friends and a high-pressured job, which became too much to cope with.

I'd always been able to make life-changing decisions without too much upset, but increasingly it felt like I was walking through treacle with limited emotional resources to draw upon. I was low, teary and anxious, and I started experiencing paranoid thoughts – thinking I was a terrible person. When I was younger, I sailed through bad times with humour and a supportive friendship group, but I noticed I was unable to shake things off or put on a happy face.

I told my doctor about my declining mental health around the same time as trying several types of hormone replacement therapy (HRT) – it took me a while to find one that made me feel vaguely normal. I also started on the path of NHS counselling, but it took so long to get referred that when I relocated, I couldn't face starting the process all over again.

Then, randomly, I saw an advert on social media for a self-therapy app offering video-guided interactive therapy sessions based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). I liked the idea of just taking out my phone, putting in my headphones and spending five minutes listening to a soothing voice telling me I wasn't a horrible person. I really needed something pragmatic that would give me the tools to deal with bad times.

Initially, after downloading the app, I used it every night before bed. Having 10 minutes of positive action before I switched off the light made a huge difference. The pre-recorded sessions helped me look at my thought processes and work through things I was struggling with.

> 'I was low, teary and anxious'

On the app there are short takeaways almost like pep talks, structured mini-programmes, and longer, standalone sessions to tackle various issues. This gives me a window to focus on something I had struggled with during the day, whether that's feeling inferior, or thinking that I'm bad at my job. I know I can just search for a programme on the app that can help me work through it.

Having a resource to relieve stress is important during life's challenging moments. There are certain months of the year that feel especially hard and times when I miss my mum even more. Being able to check in with my thoughts and ease painful feelings – from my phone – helps me to keep my mental health on track, so that I don't crumble.

NEED TO KNOW

- **Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is recommended by the NHS for treating anxiety, depression and other mental and physical problems.**
- **It is therapy that identifies negative thought patterns in order to create positive changes in feelings and behaviour.**
- **Some studies have found CBT techniques can also help women during the menopause.**
- **Claire used the Bloom app, which has 500+ CBT exercises to manage stress, improve sleep and build better mental habits; App Store, £58.99 a year or £13.99 monthly.**

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. PHOTOS: GETTY.

Your year of better SLEEP

Try these expert tips – before and during the night – to improve your shut-eye in 2023

How are you sleeping? It's estimated that almost half the population is affected at some point due to poor sleep environments, bad habits or hormones.* And the outlook is grim; a lack of sleep is seriously bad for our health and wellbeing.

'Almost every known ailment is linked in some way to poor sleep,' says professor Jason Ellis, director of the Northumbria Centre for Sleep Research. 'Sleep deprivation increases our risk of developing health issues and it reduces our body's ability to cope with them.'

Here's how to make some positive changes for the year ahead.

If you can't nod off...

Do you lie awake watching the hours tick by? This fall-asleep strategy will help to reduce night-time stress so you can drop off quickly and easily.

PLAN AHEAD

The foundation of any sleep routine is a regular bedtime. Our body clock likes patterns, so setting strict times for sleep and waking is by far the best thing we can do to ensure a good night's rest. Work out what time you want to get up and count backwards. 'On average, a normal amount of sleep for an adult is around seven to nine hours a night,' says Dr Irshaad Ebrahim of The London Sleep Centre. Play around with different bedtimes until you find what works for you.

SET THE SCENE FOR SLEEP

Once you've set a bedtime, get yourself ready for the night ahead. This includes optimising your sleep

space and setting yourself up for the morning. Sleep expert Dr Nerina Ramlakhan recommends easy bedroom adjustments, such as decluttering your space, keeping the lighting low, opening the window slightly and adjusting the thermostat so the room temperature is not too high.

It's likely you'll need to set an alarm for your wake time, but choose wisely. 'A loud alarm clock startles us from our sleep, which causes an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and stress levels,' says sleep expert Dr Neil Stanley. This can cause grogginess later. Use a light-based alarm clock, which gradually brightens to wake you gently. Try the **Lumie Sunrise Alarm, £49.99, Boots.**

Waking in the night? Turn over to fix it… >>

WANT TO RISE FEELING REFRESHED?

Those who wake up early feel more optimistic and proactive than people who have a lie-in. Aim to get up 10 minutes earlier every day.

CREATE YOUR RITUAL

Pick from the list below to build a bedtime sequence that suits you:

✢ Have a light snack
✢ Take a warm bath
✢ Use aromatherapy oils
✢ Sip a mug of sleep tea
✢ Write in a journal
✢ Read a chapter of a book
✢ Meditate for five minutes
✢ Jot down tomorrow's to-do list
✢ Light a candle
✢ Take a walk
✢ Spend time with a loved one
✢ Lay out your clothes and bag ready for tomorrow
✢ Give yourself a foot massage
✢ Draw the curtains and dim the lights
✢ Listen to music, a podcast or an audiobook

MAKE TIME TO RELAX

Very few people climb under the covers and fall asleep right away. It takes about two hours to prepare the mind and body for rest, so a wind-down routine ensures you're set up by bedtime. There are no rules – just avoid high-energy activities. 'Anything that stimulates your brain or triggers the release of pleasure hormones will keep you awake,' says Dr Ebrahim. Try candles, aromatherapy and soothing music. At around 8pm, your body begins the relaxation process by making the sleep hormone melatonin. One aim of your routine could be to harness this natural rhythm by adding massage or a warm bath to your ritual.

STICK WITH IT

Be patient when perfecting your bedtime routine. Start small and experiment. Add one routine change at a time and soon you'll have your own custom sleep practice.

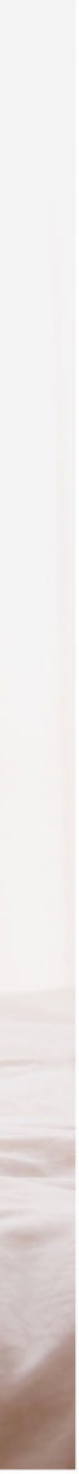
INSOMNIA-BUSTING KIT

✢ Dr. Organic Sleep Therapy Lavender Pillow Spray (£7.89 for 75ml, amazon.co.uk). Studies suggest the scent of lavender can help to ease mild insomnia, so spritz your pillow to help to improve your sleep quality.

✢ A. Vogel Dormeasan (£5.25 for 50ml, boots.com). These oral drops are made from fresh herb extracts of valerian and hops, traditionally used to reduce mild anxiety and aid restful sleep. Drink a few drops in water before bed.

✢ Heath & Heather Organic Night Time Tea (£3 for 20 bags, hollandand barrett.com). Sip this naturally caffeine-free blend of soothing herbs, including camomile valerian and hops, to support your wellbeing.

PHOTOS: GETTY. *THE SLEEP COUNCIL. **KEGEL8. CHECK WITH YOUR GP OR MEDICAL EXPERT BEFORE TAKING NEW SUPPLEMENTS. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP



What's ruining your rest?

Is broken sleep leaving you exhausted? Whether you get up to glug water or have hormonal sweats that mess with your rest, regular disturbances cause chronic sleep deprivation – so it's vital you find out what's waking you in the night. If these causes sound familiar, we've got expert solutions to help you sleep through.

HOT SWEATS

See-sawing hormones could be to blame. Night sweats are a common symptom of the menopause – in fact, three in four women experience them. The body needs to be cool for good-quality sleep so, if we overheat, we'll wake.

✢ FIX IT

'Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) works by correcting the hormone deficiency and should ease sweats within a few weeks,' says GP and menopause specialist Dr Louise Newson. Speak to your GP about whether it's right for you. 'Limit alcohol, caffeine and spicy foods in the evening,' she adds. Sleep in light cotton nightwear and swap a duvet for a few sheets.

NEEDING A WEE

Do you trudge to the bathroom numerous times in the night? Waking frequently to wee is known as nocturia, and it affects two in three women over 40. It's caused by factors such as our age, hormone changes and too much fluid before bed, explains intimate health expert Stephanie Taylor.**

✢ FIX IT

Your body's internal clock has got into the habit of going at a specific time, says Stephanie. With the help of an alarm clock, you can retrain your bladder over several weeks. Here's how:

If you normally wake at 2am to wee…

- Nights 1-3: set your alarm for 1am
- Nights 4-5: set it for 2am
- Nights 6-7: set it for 3am
- Nights 8-9: set it for 4am

…keep going until you reach your desired wake-up time.

RAGING THIRST

We need to drink roughly 1-2ltr of water during the day to stay hydrated over a 24-hour period. Check the colour of your urine at bedtime. It should be a very pale yellow – anything darker means you haven't had enough liquid.

✢ FIX IT

Stay hydrated, avoid salty foods and switch the central heating off before bedtime. If your thirst can't be quenched with a drink, see your GP as it could be a sign of diabetes.

BAD DREAMS

Scientists aren't entirely sure why we have them, but distressing dreams could be linked to stress or trauma. 'Nightmares may indicate the presence of unresolved mental conflict, and the dream imagery can be our brain's way of processing it,' explains Samantha Briscoe, senior physiologist at London Bridge Hospital.

✢ FIX IT

One technique used in the treatment of nightmares associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is 'image rehearsal'. The idea is to practise visualising different endings to recurring nightmares during the day, giving your brain a bank of alternative ideas to use next time.

HEARTBURN

Got a burning feeling in the chest and throat? 'This is stomach acid splashing up the gullet and causing irritation,' explains consultant gastroenterologist Dr Vishal Saxena. It happens when the valve closing the gullet off from the stomach doesn't work properly.

✢ FIX IT

Avoid eating just before bed, especially large or greasy meals. And try propping yourself up with pillows. Take over-the-counter antacids to relieve symptoms.

LOUD SNORES

Whether it's you or your partner, snoring is disruptive and infuriating. Being overweight is a factor, says GP Dr Riccardo Di Cuffa (your-doctor.co.uk), 'and age-related changes to muscle tone in the neck exacerbate the problem.' Drinking alcohol makes snoring worse because it relaxes the neck muscles further.

✢ FIX IT

Cut back on booze, lose weight and quit smoking. See your GP if you're waking up gasping for breath, which is a sign of sleep apnoea.

WHEN YOU WAKE...

If you're staring at the ceiling in the early hours, these tips will help you go back to sleep.

✢ **Distract yourself,** says Dr Stanley. Create a non-stressful problem to solve, such as how you'd decorate your home.

✢ **Let go of tension.** Clenching and relaxing every muscle group from head to toe – 'progressive muscle relaxation' – can soothe your body back into sleep mode.

✢ **Rub behind your ear.** Find the spot where there's an obvious hollow – where your neck muscles connect with your jawline. 'It's one of the most relaxing points in the body,' says Gillian Berry, a member of the British Acupuncture Council.

✢ **Focus on your breath,** noticing each inhale and exhale. 'It's a way of quietening your mind,' says Dr Stanley.

✢ **Don't force it.** 'If you're still awake after 20 minutes, get up, do a bit of ironing or read before putting yourself back to bed,' says sleep expert Sammy Margo.

BE BRAVE *Let'em in*

While it might seem daunting, showing your vulnerable side could have a big impact on your life

Afraid to cry in front of others, and find it difficult to open up? You may have a fear of vulnerability – letting your guard down and saying what's going on for you on the inside. 'That's because it comes with an emotional risk – there's a chance we could get hurt,' says consultant psychologist Dr Elena Touroni*. 'But what we stand to gain from being vulnerable is much greater.'

Want to embrace your vulnerable side? Here, our experts explain how to get comfortable with opening up and how it can enrich your life.

IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIPS

Allowing others access to your inner world will help you make better connections. 'When we're not being vulnerable about ourselves and our opinions, it can make relationships seem superficial,' says clinical psychologist Dr Marianne Trent**. 'While superficiality might be OK for short-term commitments, for long-term, functional ones with a sense of realness, a relationship will need vulnerability.'

SPOT THE SIGNS

If you recognise any of these behaviours in yourself, you might be resistant to opening up:

✢ **PROBLEMS ARE IGNORED**

Friends taking you for granted? Partner neglecting you? Rather than speaking up, you tell yourself things are 'not a big deal'. 'Long term, this is likely to contribute to feelings of anxiety and maybe even low mood,' says Dr Trent.

✢ **YOU DON'T SHARE FEELINGS**

This is often due to a fear of criticism or rejection. 'It's common in people who have been raised in highly critical environments but, as adults, we can learn to create safe relationships with others,' she says.

✢ **CONFLICT FEELS SCARY**

Do you go quiet or leave the room at the first sign of disagreement? 'Sometimes it can be a trauma reaction from childhood or previous relationships, rather than being linked to who you're with at the time,' says Dr Trent.

GIVE IT A GO

Don't panic – you don't need to jump in at the deep end with vulnerability. There are small steps you can take to practise and find what works for you…

✢ **START SLOW**

Seeing someone new? You're not expected to share personal details from the first date. In fact, Dr Touroni advises not to. 'Gradually share small parts of yourself. It might be your fears or what you struggled with growing up. Over time, you'll build trust in the relationship. And the safer you feel, the easier it'll become,' she says.

✢ **CONNECT WITH YOURSELF**

'In order to be vulnerable, you need to be connected to your emotional world,' says Dr Touroni. Therapy can be a great place to start. Your therapist will gently guide you to recognise and name your emotions, helping you to understand yourself and how you relate to others.

✢ **COMMUNICATE YOUR NEEDS**

'We're much more likely to feel our needs have been met if we have honestly communicated those needs in the first place,' says Dr Trent. 'Don't expect someone to be a mind-reader. If you'd really like someone meeting you at a train station, cooking dinner for you, or calling when they say they are going to, then ask.'

✢ **EXPLORE WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK**

'If you struggle with being vulnerable, dig deeper to explore what might be holding you back. How did your family deal with emotions when you were growing up? Did they brush things under the carpet?' says Dr Touroni. Knowing where this fear stems from can help you to choose a different, more helpful approach.

4 BENEFITS OF BEING VULNERABLE

1 **LESS BURNOUT**

Being vulnerable and aware can help us work through difficulties at the time, rather than distracting or avoiding things which crop up for us within our lives. 'This is a wonderful benefit as it means that struggles are less likely to escalate and lead to exhaustion,' says Dr Trent.

2 **FEELING 'SEEN'**

While this can feel a little scary at first, allowing others to see your real self can help you to feel loved and valued for who you truly are, says Dr Touroni. This can help combat feelings of deep loneliness.

3 **BETTER BOUNDARIES**

'When we are vulnerable and courageous, we can also practise being more assertive,' says Dr Trent. 'This means you're more likely to speak out if you feel you're receiving less than ideal treatment from someone.' This can also contribute to greater life enjoyment and relationship satisfaction.

4 **DEEPER CONNECTIONS**

'In a mutually vulnerable relationship, you will both benefit from strength, resilience and connection,' says Dr Trent. It will feel like you are part of something special and unique as you are both bringing your real selves together.

OPEN UP

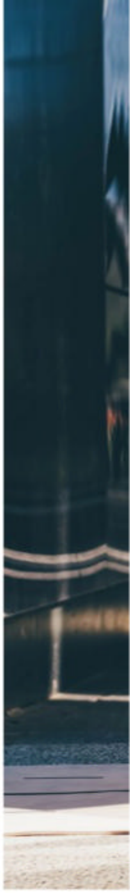
Find a therapist in your local area at psychotherapy.org.uk or bacp.co.uk. Therapy options will be stated on their profile.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. *CO-FOUNDER OF THE CHELSEA PSYCHOLOGY CLINIC. **CREATOR OF THE FEEL BETTER ACADEMY. WORDS: ROSE GOODMAN. PHOTO: GETTY.

Give your *BRAIN* a MICROBI

REAK

Just a few minutes' rest can help you reset and recharge. Here's how to refocus your energy quickly and effectively



We all know that taking a break is good for us, both mentally and physically, but were you aware that even short breaks make a big difference? For example, research has shown that employees benefit from mini breathers. 'A series of recent studies on work breaks have argued that microbreaks are beneficial for wellbeing and productivity,' says Professor Sooyeol Kim, who conducted one of the studies. 'Taking microbreaks helps employees take respite and boost their energy.' Yet microbreaks don't have to be restricted to our jobs – they can be taken at any time and in any place.

'Microbreaks are becoming more common and are increasingly fundamental for positive mental wellbeing,' says life coach Kamran Bedi, author of *The Anxiety Antidote* (£12.99, Watkins). 'Breaking up your day with one- to 10-minute breaks from work, tasks, and always being on the go, can help relieve stress and anxiety, and overstimulation from the internet, social media and screen time.'

This sounds encouraging, but you may be wondering how short breaks work as well as longer ones. Here's why: 'Microbreaks help because the brain can only focus on a specific activity for a certain length of time,' says life coach Siân Winslade (sianwinslade.com). 'We've been led to believe that multitasking is a good thing, whereas it just allows us to do two tasks at 50% capacity, doing neither of them well. We think that working through and finishing something is more important than how we're feeling, but if we think of our brains as batteries going into low power mode as our phones do, we use less brain power, go slower and become less bright and perky.'

The beauty of microbreaks is that they don't take too much time, although you'll need to commit if you want to reap the benefits. 'Returning to a simpler, slower pace of living with a 10-minute break can work wonders on your mind and body,' says Kamran.

'But incorporating a microbreak into your day-to-day comes through self-awareness and self-action.'

To get started, set regular alarms or add some microbreaks to your daily 'to do' list – like the ones we've suggested below – that way, you'll start to integrate them into your life. Trust us, you won't regret it.

PET YOUR PET
Stroking a cat or dog for 10 minutes can significantly reduce stress, say studies.

HAVE A NAP

Also known as a power nap, a short nap can give you as much energy as two cups of strong coffee, and the effects are longer-lasting, says Lisa Artis, deputy CEO at The Sleep Charity. 'We'd usually recommend around 20 minutes to give the body a chance to recharge, but some people feel the effects from a micronap (10 minutes),' she says. 'The best time to nap is the post-lunch lull (between 1pm and 3pm) – to avoid sleeping longer, set an alarm on your phone. An alternative is to hold a set of keys in your hand and lie down with your hand hanging. As you lose consciousness the keys will slip out of your grasp and wake you as they hit the floor.'

HYDRATE

Water is the basis of life, and even mild dehydration can adversely affect our blood pressure, body temperature and heart rate. Dr Kim recommends drinking water throughout the day, as does Siân. 'Keeping a bottle of water nearby helps not only with your concentration and reaction time, but improves memory and mood, and reduces headaches, tiredness and anxiety,' she says. Take frequent small sips rather than gulping down a whole glass – this enables the body to store more water because it won't overload the kidneys (and you'll need the toilet less).

Contrary to popular belief, the recommended two litres per day doesn't have to come just from water – black, green or herbal teas count, as does milk (especially fat-free) and even milky coffee.

HUM!
A few minutes' humming, chanting or singing stimulates the vagus nerve, which can calm the nervous system.

LISTEN TO MOZART

We know that music has the ability to affect our emotional state, but certain music can actually make us think more clearly. It's known as the Mozart Effect,

NEED SOME ENCOURAGEMENT?

Try the Pomodoro Technique

If you struggle to focus on tasks, then feel guilty taking breaks, you may need the Pomodoro Technique. For those who are wondering, it's named after the tomato-shaped kitchen timer the inventor, Francesco Cirillo, used to develop the method ('pomodoro' is Italian for 'tomato'). 'The Pomodoro Technique is one of the most effective ways of taking a break,' says Siân, who shows us how here:

- For every 25 minutes of focused time, take a five-minute break.
- This can be repeated up to four times, then you'll need a longer break of 20-30 minutes.
- One of the most important aspects of the Pomodoro Technique is that you move away from screens. Reading websites and checking emails taxes many of the same mental processes we use when working, compounding tiredness, so don't use your break to do anything that requires a screen.
- Increase your heart rate and get 20 minutes' exercise every two hours by doing five minutes of movement every 25 minutes. Try jogging on the spot, lunges, squats or stretches.
- For extra support, download a Pomodoro timer from the App store or Google Play.

WORDS: DEBRA WATERS. PHOTOS: GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP.
*NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/PMC/ARTICLES/PMC1281386. **AERZTEBLATT.DE/INT/ARCHIVE/ARTICLE?ID=179298

and researchers found that listening to 10 minutes of Mozart improved people's spatial-temporal reasoning* (the ability to organise and problem-solve). And another study** found that listening to Mozart for 25 minutes reduced blood pressure.

If you're not in the mood for classical, any music that means something to you can alter your mood. 'Music is a great way to anchor particular emotions,' says Zoe Thompson (phoenixlifecoach.co.uk). 'I have a playlist that's calming, and one that's energising. Think about songs that make you feel a certain way and create your own playlists – just one or two tracks in five minutes can completely change your mood.'

SHOWER POWER
Various studies show that a cold shower boosts mood and immunity, reduces pain, and increases alertness.

MEDITATE

Sometimes, a few minutes of alone time can be all you need to mentally regroup. And if you meditate you'll feel even better. 'Whether you choose a guided meditation or you take some time out in a quiet room, meditation can help you focus on the present and be aware of your thoughts and feelings,' says life coach Zoe. 'This can bring a sense of calm and improve attention and focus.' The Headspace app (from £4.17 a month) includes guided 'mini' meditations.

TRY YOGA

You don't need to commit to an hour's class – a few yogic breathing exercises and postures make an ideal microbreak.

'Yoga is a great way to bring you into the present moment and help you focus,' says yoga teacher Danny Griffiths (yoga-fit.co.uk). 'There are many variations, but a common thread is breathwork, known as pranayama. Bringing our attention to the breath and relearning to breathe slowly and fully can de-stress, which in turn helps with concentration and clarity. For example, alternate-nostril breathing such as nadi shodhana infuses the body with oxygen, calming and rejuvenating the nervous system.'

You'll also benefit from a couple of postures – balancing postures, for instance, are particularly good for concentration. 'Tree pose helps ground you, enhancing stability and calming the nervous system,' says Danny. 'While dancer's pose is another balancing posture that helps bring you into the present. This is great for getting over stress and anxiety, clearing the mind of useless thoughts, and improving blood circulation and endurance.'

STEP OUTSIDE

A change is as good as a rest, and that includes even the simple action of stepping outdoors to look at a different view. 'It's important to get outside, if only for a short period,' says Siân. 'Changing the environment allows for more stimulation of the brain and improves focus, reduces stress hormones, and improves mood.'

And while you're outside, why not take a short walk? Even a quick stroll to the shops, or around the garden, is a microbreak well spent. 'Walking raises the heart rate, therefore improving cardiovascular health, and helps you regulate deeper breathing, while the physical movement can also help release any stress or tension and re-energise you,' says Zoe. 'Getting outside also provides fresh air and very important vitamin D exposure, which aids our sleep and immune system.'

MICRO-HABITS

It's not just microbreaks that do us good. Micro-habits – that's a positive habit no more than a few moments long – can enhance our lives by empowering us to take small steps towards goals without overwhelming us. Here are some micro-habits to incorporate into your day.

- **TIDY** Make your bed – a tidy house is a tidy mind.
- **HYDRATE** Swap that first cup of tea or coffee for a glass of water.
- **ORGANISE** Write a daily to-do list in order of importance to help your day go smoothly.
- **BREATHE** Each time you unnecessarily reach for your phone (eg to check social media or play games), take deep, slow breaths for 30 seconds instead.
- **LEARN** Read a book, play the piano, write in your journal, or use a language app for just 5 minutes a day – eventually, you'll find yourself doing it for longer without it feeling like an effort.

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FIRST PUBLISHED 23 DECEMBER 2021

YOU & YOUR DIET

EAT SMART, FEEL AMAZING

New Year need not trigger the dreaded diet. See it instead as a fresh start, a chance to change your eating habits for the better. Your body will reward you with more energy, immunity and the shape you want. Want to cut down on the amount of meat you're eating in 2023? Why not embrace Veganuary with our delicious curries? We've also found 55 clever ways to slim naturally – and we get a lesson for the future from the eating habits of the past.

PHOTO: GETTY

Your winter WELLNESS DIET

We get less vitamin D during shorter days. This easy eating plan will boost your levels and make you feel younger, healthier and trimmer too!

During the summer months, a 20-minute dose of sunshine on sunscreen-free skin should provide you with all the vitamin D that you need. But over the longer, darker days of winter, it's much more difficult to keep levels topped up. However, we know that vitamin D is vital for good health all year round, so it's important that we do.

Not only does it boost the immune system and strengthen bones and muscles, it helps your body absorb and use calcium effectively. There's also increasing evidence vitamin D levels are linked to a trimmer waistline, too. In fact, research at the University of Milan revealed that vitamin D supplements boosted weight loss in overweight people who were deficient in the nutrient. And that's not all – an American study* found that overweight adults given extra vitamin D, plus calcium, lost significantly more stomach fat than those not taking any supplements.

Researchers aren't certain how vitamin D is associated with weight, but one theory is that it helps indirectly by reducing levels of chronic inflammation thought to drive obesity. Vitamin D has also been linked with better moods, too, which is particularly helpful when we spend less time outside and more time indoors keeping warm.

This two-week plan is filled with calorie-controlled meals, based around fruit, veg and high-fibre wholegrains to help fill you up for longer. There are also moderate amounts of calcium-rich dairy to help with fat-burning, along with lean protein foods to help curb your appetite. Plus, the vitamin D-rich foods in these meals help optimise weight loss. If you want to keep the diet going once the two weeks is up, feel free – you could lose as much as 10lb in one month!

WHAT TO DO...

- Choose any breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, plus a snack.
- Make choices that will give you at least 10 VIT D points a week, and ideally nearer to 20.
- To drink, stick to water and calorie-free drinks, such as herbal teas.
- Once a week, you can threat yourself to one large 250ml glass or two small 125ml glasses of wine instead of a snack, if you like.

LOSE 10LB IN A MONTH

TOP SOURCES OF VITAMIN D

Your daily recommended intake is 5-10 micrograms (mcg). These food sources provide...

- **6 vitamin D-enriched mushrooms = 10mcg**
- **140g salmon fillet = 6.5mcg**
- **Small can sardines = 3mcg**
- **100g smoked salmon = 10mcg**
- **100g smoked mackerel = 8mcg**
- **2 eggs = 3.8 mcg**
- **100g canned salmon = 12mcg**
- **1 small rainbow trout = 12mcg**
- **100g canned tuna = 1mcg**

BREAKFASTS

BANANA PORRIDGE
Porridge made with 50g oats and 270ml skimmed milk, topped with 1 sliced banana.

EGGS ON TOAST
2 poached eggs on 1 slice of wholemeal toast (1 VIT D POINT); 100g low-fat natural yogurt and a handful of raspberries.

SCRAMBLED EGGS AND MUSHROOMS
Scrambled eggs (2 eggs, dash of milk and 1 level tsp butter) on 1 slice of wholemeal toast, with a handful of stir-fried mushrooms (2 VIT D POINTS).

EGG AND SALMON RYVITA
100g smoked salmon and 1 sliced boiled egg on 2 Ryvita (3 VIT D POINTS); bowl of raspberries.

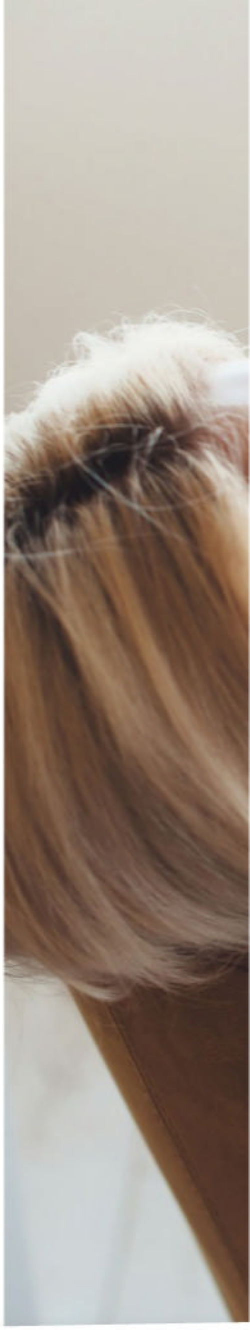
BERRIES, YOGURT AND SEEDS
Bowl of strawberries with 200g full-fat Greek yogurt and 1tbsp seeds.

SMOOTHIE
200ml skimmed cow's or almond milk, whizzed with 1tbsp wheat germ, 100g fresh or frozen mixed berries, 2tsp honey and 1tbsp almond butter.

BACON AND TOMATO
2 grilled rashers of bacon and 1 grilled tomato on 1 slice of toast with a small scrape of butter.

CHECK YOUR VITAMIN D STATUS

Concerned that you are deficient in vitamin D? Speak to your GP, who may do a test. You can also get a DIY blood spot test from vitaminDtest.org.uk



LUNCHES

+ BEAN AND TUNA SALAD
Mix 80g blanched fine green beans with ½ can drained borlotti beans and ½ x 200g can tuna in spring water. Add 1tbsp toasted pine nuts and 1tbsp parsley. Dress with 2tsp olive oil and balsamic vinegar, and serve on a bed of watercress.

+ PRAWN AND WATERCRESS PITTA
1 wholemeal pitta packed with 150g prawns, watercress and 2tbsp light thousand island dressing; 125g low-fat natural yogurt with 1 chopped apple.

+ WATERCRESS, AVOCADO AND MANGO SALAD
Toss a handful of watercress, ½ diced avocado, ¼ of a large mango and 1tbsp each of slivered almonds and golden raisins with 2tsp olive oil and 1tbsp white wine vinegar.

+ SWEET POTATO AND SALMON
Baked sweet potato (220g uncooked weight) topped with 100g smoked salmon and 2 level tbsp half-fat crème fraiche, served with watercress and cherry tomatoes **(2 VIT D POINTS)**.

+ SARDINES ON TOAST
1 can of sardines in tomato sauce on 1 slice of wholemeal toast, served with a large handful of watercress, cherry tomato and cucumber salad, with 2tbsp Sainsbury's Be Good To Yourself Honey & Mustard or French Dressing **(1 VIT D POINT)**.

+ CHEF'S SALAD
Shredded lettuce, 3 chopped raw vitamin D-enriched mushrooms, 50g prawns, 2tbsp sweetcorn, handful of chopped cherry tomatoes, 50g lean chopped gammon ham and 1 chopped hard-boiled egg **(3 VIT D POINTS)**.

+ BOUGHT SALMON SANDWICH
A supermarket poached salmon sandwich **(1 VIT D POINT)** and 1 nectarine.

SHOP FOR FORTIFIED FOODS

Look out, too, for foods that are fortified with vitamin D, such as yogurt, soya milk, margarine and chestnut mushrooms – leave mushrooms in sunlight on the windowsill to increase vitamin D levels.

DINNERS

+ MUSHROOM STROGANOFF
Chopped mushrooms stir-fried with 100g lean beef strips. Add 2tbsp half-fat crème fraiche and a dash of madeira or dry sherry. Serve with broccoli and 4tbsp brown rice **(3 VIT D points)**.

+ CHICKEN AND NOODLE STIR-FRY
Stir-fry 1 chopped chicken breast in 1tsp oil with ginger and chilli, and ½ bag of stir-fry veg. When cooked, add 150g wholewheat noodles, fry for 2 mins more and add reduced-salt soy sauce.

+ ROSEMARY LAMB WITH BUTTERNUT SQUASH
A grilled lamb leg steak (120g cooked weight), rubbed with ground coriander and rosemary. Serve with butternut squash (200g cubes roasted with 1tbsp oil) and crushed peas.

+ WHOLEWHEAT CHICKEN FAJITAS
Stir-fry 1 chopped chicken breast, some red pepper and onion in a brush of olive oil. Wrap in a wholewheat tortilla with 2tbsp half-fat sour cream or crème fraiche and some salsa.

+ FAST FOOD CHILLI AND SALMON
Serve a Bol Peri Peri Sweet Potato Stew pot with a baked salmon fillet **(2 VIT D POINTS)**.

+ REDUCED-FAT SPAGHETTI BOLOGNESE
100g 5% fat minced beef, browned with chopped onions, carrot, celery and red pepper (add 1 can chopped

tomatoes with herbs). Serve with 75g (dry weight) wholewheat spaghetti, tomato and cucumber salad.

✢ TROUT WITH NEW POTATOES AND RATATOUILLE

A grilled small whole rainbow trout, served with 3 new potatoes and ratatouille (stir-fry courgettes, peppers, red onion and aubergines; simmer with 1 can of chopped tomatoes and a sprinkle of herbes de Provence) **(3 VIT D POINTS)**.

✢ VEGETABLE AND CHEESE OMELETTE

Fry ½ courgette, ½ red onion and ½ red pepper in 1tsp oil. Pour over 2 beaten eggs mixed with 1tbsp skimmed milk and cook until set. Top with 2tbsp grated cheese and grill until bubbling. Serve with salad and 50g crusty bread **(1 VIT D POINT)**.

SNACKS

✢ 200ml glass of skimmed milk and a banana

✢ 20g Cheddar stick and a 15g bag of sweet and salt popcorn

✢ 150g prawns and a handful of cherry tomatoes with 2tbsp low-fat thousand island dressing

✢ A chopped banana topped with 100g low-fat natural yogurt

✢ 25g handful of peanuts

✢ 100g tikka sliced chicken breast with 1tbsp raita

✢ 100g grapes and 3 citrus easy peelers

GET THE BEST RESULTS

✢ Decide in advance what meals and snacks you're going to have for the week and make yourself a shopping list. This way, you probably won't be as tempted to steer your trolley down the naughtier aisles of the supermarket!

✢ Don't shop when you're feeling hungry, as you might end up giving in to the temptation of snacks or junk food.

✢ If you're having a craving for a particular food, try to distract yourself with a specific task (or take a walk or make a phone call). Like a wave, cravings tend to rise then ebb away.

*PUBLISHED IN *THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF CLINICAL NUTRITION*. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. PHOTOS: GETTY

So vegan, SO GOOD!

Brimming with goodness, these meat-free spins on comforting South Asian classics will nourish through Veganuary and beyond

Tempeh, cabbage and bean stir-fry

Bean and potato curry

Bean and potato curry

Packed full of beans this curry is an excellent source of fibre and healthy cholesterol, and great for digestion.

Serves 2–3 • Prep 20 mins • Cook 25 mins

2tbsp vegetable oil
½tsp cumin seeds
½tsp black or brown mustard seeds
3 bay leaves
1 cinnamon stick
1 star anise
1 banana shallot, thinly sliced
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2.5cm ginger, finely chopped
2tbsp mild curry powder
1tbsp tamarind paste
½ tsp sugar
300g baby potatoes, pre-boiled
100ml coconut milk
1 x 200g can red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 x 200g can edamame, rinsed and drained
1 x 200g can black beans, rinsed and drained
Rice, to serve

1 Heat the oil in a pan over a medium heat. Add the cumin, mustard, bay, cinnamon and star anise. Cook for 1 min. Add the shallot, garlic and ginger. Cook for 2–3 mins until golden brown.
2 Stir in the curry powder, with 300ml water. Add the tamarind, 1tsp salt and the sugar. Cook for 3 mins over a low heat. Add the potatoes and coconut milk and cook for 2 mins. Stir in the beans and cook for 2 mins, remove from the heat. Serve with rice.
Per servings (if serving 3): 453cals, 20g fat, 7g sat fat, 41g carbs

TIP: Use any beans or veg you like, such as peas or fine beans

Vegetable Tom Yum soup

A Thai soup filled with plenty of veggie goodness, perfect for chilly evenings.

Serves 4 • Prep 20 mins • Cook 20 mins

1tbsp vegetable oil
1tbsp palm sugar, or use brown sugar
2tsp fine sea salt
3tbsp tamarind paste
1tbsp light soy sauce
100g shiitake mushrooms, sliced
100g fine beans, both ends trimmed, cut into pieces 3cm long
1 carrot, thinly sliced
12 cherry tomatoes, halved
300g Chinese leaf (cabbage), cut lengthways into 1cm strips
5 lime leaves, ribs removed and thinly sliced
Handful of fresh coriander, leaves picked
For the paste:
1 onion, thinly sliced
3 garlic cloves, sliced
3 red chillies, deseeded
2 stalks of lemongrass, white part only, bruised and thinly sliced
5cm ginger

1 In a food processor, blitz the paste ingredients with 2tbsp of water.
2 Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium high heat and fry the paste for 3 mins. Stir in the sugar, salt, tamarind and soy sauce, cook for 1 min. Add the mushrooms, beans and carrot, stir well and then pour in 1ltr of water. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer for 10 mins.
3 Add the tomatoes, cabbage and lime leaves. Cook for 2 mins. Turn off the heat, transfer to four serving bowls and garnish with the coriander.
Per serving: 150cals, 4g fat, 0.5g sat fat, 21g carbs

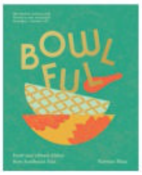
Tempeh, cabbage and bean stir-fry

Commonly used in Indonesian cooking, tempeh gets a lovely crispy exterior when fried. It's easier to digest than tofu, and contains more fibre and protein.

Serves 4 • Prep 20 mins • Cook 20 mins

2tbsp chilli oil
2tbsp sweet soy sauce
2tsp sesame oil
3tbsp vegetable oil
200g tempeh, cut into 1cm slices
3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 banana shallot, thinly sliced
1 courgette, about 300g, cut lengthways and cut into 1cm slices
200g fine beans, trimmed and cut diagonally into 4cm pieces
1 Chinese cabbage, cut into 2cm strips
Jasmine rice, to serve

1 In a small bowl, combine the chilli oil, soy sauce and sesame oil. Heat the vegetable oil in a wok or large frying pan over a medium-high heat. Fry the tempeh in batches for 2 mins on each side until brown and crispy; set aside.
2 Leave the remaining oil in the pan and fry the garlic and shallot for 2 mins until golden. Add the courgette and beans with 1tsp salt, cover the pan with a lid and cook for 3 mins.
3 Add the cabbage, cook for 3 more mins with the lid on, stirring often until the cabbage has wilted. Pour in the sauce mixture and cook for 1 min, then stir in the tempeh. Give the pan another good stir and cook for a further min. Serve with jasmine rice.
Per serving: 272cals, 19g fat, 1g sat fat, 8g carbs



Bowlful: Fresh and vibrant dishes from Southeast Asia **by Norman Musa (Pavilion Books), RRP £20, HB**

Jackfruit salad

This simple salad makes a great alternative to coleslaw. Perfect as a light meal, it's also excellent stuffed into rolls, *banh mi* style, with some grilled marinated tofu.

Serves 4 • Prep 15 mins • Cook 3 mins

200g runner beans, cut diagonally into thin strips
1 medium carrot, cut into thin strips
2 x 565g cans jackfruit in brine, rinsed, drained and cut into thin slices
1½tsp coarsely ground black pepper
Juice of 1 lime, plus extra to finish
2tbsp desiccated coconut, lightly toasted
For the dressing:
1tbsp vegetable oil
1 banana shallot, thinly sliced
2 lemongrass stalks, thinly sliced
2 red chillies, deseeded and thinly sliced
100ml coconut milk
1½tsp fine sea salt
½tbsp palm sugar, or light brown sugar

1 Blanch the beans and carrot in a pan of boiling water for 1 min. Drain and set aside.
2 For the dressing, heat the oil in a frying pan over medium heat. Fry the shallots, lemongrass and chillies for 1 min, then add the coconut milk, salt and sugar. Cook for another 1 min, then set aside to cool completely.
3 In a large bowl, toss the beans, carrot and jackfruit with the dressing until all the ingredients are well mixed. Add the pepper and lime juice if liked. Serve immediately.
Per serving: 190cals, 13g fat, 8g sat fat, 11g carbs

RECIPES FROM BOWLFUL: FRESH AND VIBRANT DISHES FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA. PHOTOS: LUKE J ALBERT

55 WAYS TO SLIM *without trying!*

These simple shortcuts will help you hit your weight-loss goals

With the cold weather making us crave comfort food, losing weight can feel impossible. But you don't need extreme exercise or a low-cal plan to keep off the pounds. Introduce some of these nifty slimming tricks to supercharge your fat burn – fast.

1 *EAT IN THE LIGHT*

Dim lighting makes you eat more, because you're less self-aware and more likely to let go of inhibitions.

2 BRUSH YOUR TEETH AFTER YOUR EVENING MEAL

You'll be less likely to snack when sat in front of the TV.

3 *BURN VANILLA-SCENTED CANDLES*

The delicious aroma wafting round the room reduces sweet cravings.

4 ADD A TOUCH OF HEAT

Capsaicin is a compound found in chilli peppers that helps your body convert fat into heat, and it's said to boost your metabolism by about 8%, too.

5 *TUNE INTO CLASSIC FM*

Playing relaxing music during a meal is believed to slow down your eating pace.

6 REARRANGE YOUR CUPBOARDS

We crave what we can see, so pull all the healthy foods to the front.

7 *EAT LITTLE AND OFTEN*

People who ate six mini meals a day had a lower BMI, found one study.*

8 GROW FRESH MINT

People who sniffed mint when they had a craving were found to lose more weight compared to those who didn't, said an American study.

THINK NEAT

Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis is the energy expended while doing day-to-day activities. See what you can burn…

9 Dusting = 166 calories per hour
10 Vacuuming = 175 calories per hour
11 Cleaning the bathroom = 180 calories per hour
12 Mopping = 200 calories per hour
13 Ironing = 157 calories per hour
14 Sex = 69 calories per session

15 *PLAN SOME FOOD-FREE SOCIAL EVENTS*

Meet your mates for a walk instead of dinner. This way there's no opportunity for you to overindulge.

16 KICK-START YOUR MORNING WITH WARM WATER AND LEMON

It's a refreshing and healthy way to help fire up your metabolism.

17 PRIORITISE YOUR SLEEP

Eight hours of shut-eye a night helps to maintain your metabolic rate.

18 *PICK POTATOES*

Boiled potatoes came top in research that looked at the hunger-reducing properties of 38 different foods, but stick to moderate portions.

19 USE RED PLATES

The brain sees red as danger, so you'll eat 40% fewer calories if you serve your meals on red crockery, according to German researchers.

20 *SWITCH TO GREEN TEA*

It contains high levels of the natural compound epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), which can help boost fat burning – and it's an antioxidant.

21 BUY BISCUITS YOU DON'T LIKE

If your partner isn't joining you on a weight-loss journey, buy them sweet treats that you won't be tempted by.

CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

22 Keep a food diary
Jotting down what you eat could help you stay on track.

23 Get your house in order
A good clear-out proves to yourself that you can achieve your goals.

24 Send motivational messages
Use your phone to send diet reminders at tricky times, such as the 3pm post-lunchtime lull.

25 Weigh in...
...on a Friday morning. Studies show that we're likely to be at our lightest just before the weekend, and a positive reading from the scales will help to keep morale high.

26 EMBRACE 'GOOD' FATS

Omega-3 essential fatty acids in oily fish can help burn fat. Eating 3g of fish oil per day for 12 weeks may increase metabolic rate by around 14%.

27 *SWAP BUTTER FOR PEANUT BUTTER*

It contains 12 fewer calories per tablespoon than ordinary spread and is high in protein.

28 REDUCE YOUR LOAF SIZE

Eat two or three slices of bread every day? You'll cut over 100 calories simply by swapping from an 800g loaf (about 113 cals per slice) to a smaller 400g one (70 cals per slice).

29 *MEASURE OIL BY THE TEASPOONFUL*

Using just 1tsp (approx 42 calories) for a stir-fry or salad could save about 100 calories compared with pouring oil without checking the amount used.

30 DRINK WATER BEFORE A MEAL

People who drank two glasses of water prior to eating consumed up to 90 fewer calories in an American study.

BEAT THE BLOAT

31 Chew every bite 30 times!
This ensures your food is properly mixed with saliva to aid digestion, says nutritionist Shona Wilkinson.

32 Avoid gum
It can make you swallow excess air, causing your belly to balloon.

33 Add ginger
It speeds up the digestive process.

34 Feed your gut
Gut microorganisms are integral to a smooth digestive system. Ensure you are getting enough prebiotics (such as bananas, onions and oats) and probiotics (yogurt and sauerkraut) in your diet.

35 Get screened
If you suffer from excess gas often, ask your GP to screen you for intolerances to things such as lactose.

36 Stay hydrated

37 *RESIZE YOUR CEREAL*

Weigh out the 30-40g serving recommendation and you'll save, on average, about 100 calories per meal.

Turn over for more clever tricks... >>

38 USE THE RULE FOR SENSIBLE CHOICES

Use the three, five or seven rule. For example, three biscuits, five squares of chocolate or seven crisps.

39 EAT TOPPINGS BEFORE CRUSTS

Tucking in to pizza? You can shave off around 100 calories by cutting the doughy edge from each slice.

40 FOLLOW A RAINBOW

Get as many colours into your meals to max out on vitamins and minerals.

CRACK YOUR CRAVINGS

Nutritionist Dr Marilyn Glenville shares her top tips…

41 AVOID SWEETENERS

'They can slow the digestive process and increase appetite.'

42 BE CAREFUL WITH CAFFEINE

'Don't drink your latte on an empty stomach, as it goes straight into the bloodstream and triggers cortisol release. This stress hormone makes the body store fat.'

43 CHOOSE FOODS THAT ENHANCE YOUR MOOD

'Carb cravings are a sign of low levels of the amino acid tryptophan, which is necessary for serotonin production – a 'happy' brain chemical. A lack of it can lead to low mood and anxiety. Include tryptophan-rich foods in your diet, such as turkey, eggs, bananas and walnuts.'

INCREASE THE CALORIE BURN

Get more from your workout…

44 LOOK FOR A 30-DAY CHALLENGE ON YOUTUBE

By the end of it you'll be a lot fitter and you'll have built a habit that you are likely to sustain.

45 DOWNLOAD AN APP

Fitness app users are 75% more active than non-users or past users**. Try the free NHS Couch to 5K app.

46 BUDDY UP

You can boost your workout time and intensity by 200% if you exercise with a friend (especially if they're in better shape than you), according to a study by Kansas State University.

47 GET FIGHTING FIT

You can burn 400 cals with just 30 minutes of shadow boxing, plus twisting your torso as you punch is ideal for slimming your sides.

48 STEP IT UP

Aim to do 10,000 steps per day.

49 POWER UP ON PROTEIN

Get your recommended intake of protein (0.75g per kg of body weight) to help maintain your strength.
So, if you weigh 60kg, that's 0.75 x 60 = 45g per day.

50 HIT THE POOL

Opt for front crawl as it burns more calories than breaststroke.

51 STRETCH IT OUT

Practising yoga every day could improve long-term weight loss by reducing stress, according to a study.***

52 TRY LITTER-PICKING

Bending and reaching as you walk will burn more calories – and you're doing your bit for the community, too!

53 LIFT WEIGHTS (EVEN SMALL ONES!)

Try using a basket instead of a trolley in the supermarket.

54 TONE YOUR ARMS

Using a treadmill? Walk on an incline of 10%, lean forward and hold the handrails to include an arm workout.

55 CHANGE YOUR WALKING PACE

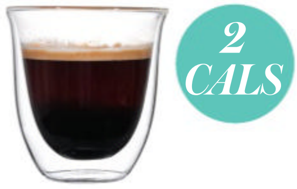
You can burn up to 20% more calories by varying the speed at which you walk, found researchers at Ohio State University in the US.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. CHECK WITH YOUR GP OR MEDICAL EXPERT BEFORE TAKING NEW SUPPLEMENTS. PHOTOS: GETTY. *JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS. **JOURNAL OF MEDICAL INTERNET RESEARCH. ***PLOS ONE

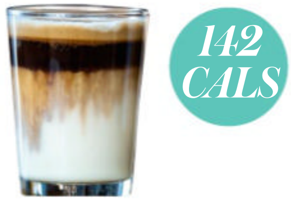
SIP YOURSELF SLIMMER

Know what you're drinking with our essential guide to hot drinks

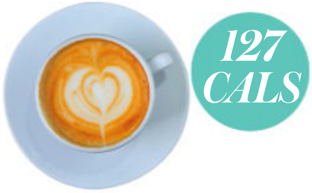
Do you like to kick-start your day with a cup of home-brewed coffee? Or a milky latte from your local cafe? The good news is that coffee is high in beneficial nutrients, including vitamins B1, B2, B3 and B5, magnesium and potassium. However, if you are watching your waistline, here is what to pick…



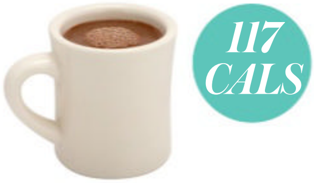
ESPRESSO/BLACK COFFEE
A low-calorie boost, but drink with water.
0g fat per shot/25ml; 60-75mg caffeine



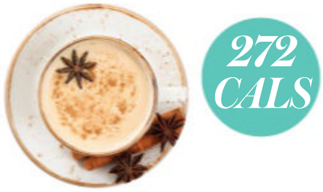
CAFFÉ LATTE
Espresso with 2-3 parts steamed milk.
8g fat with full-fat; 60mg caffeine



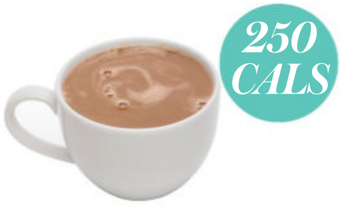
CAPPUCCINO
Equal mix of espresso and frothy milk.
7g fat with full-fat milk; 60mg caffeine



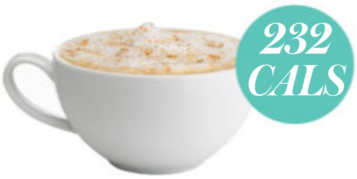
CAFFÉ MOCHA
Espresso, milk and chocolate syrup.
8g fat with full-fat milk; 75mg caffeine



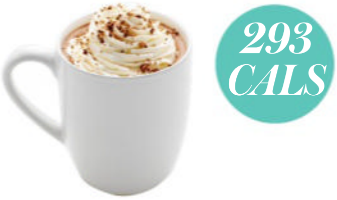
CHAI LATTE
Spiced tea with steamed milk.
8g fat with full-fat milk; 50mg caffeine



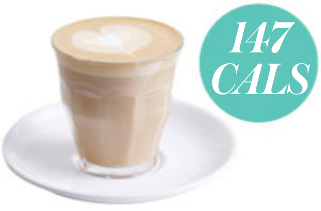
HOT CHOCOLATE
Equals 2 choc digestives and 5 sugars!
10g fat with full-fat milk; 9mg caffeine



ROASTED HAZELNUT LATTE
Espresso, milk, spices and cream.
15g fat with full-fat milk; 60mg caffeine



HOT CHOCOLATE & CREAM
Going large comes in at 556 calories!
18g fat with full-fat milk; 9mg caffeine



FLAT WHITE
Espresso with two parts steamed milk.
8g fat with full-fat milk; 60mg caffeine

WHAT ABOUT MILK?

These non-dairy options can have some health benefits, too…

✣ SOYA
Nearly as much protein and half the sugar of semi-skimmed. Ideal if you have a dairy allergy.

✣ COCONUT
Lower fat than semi-skimmed. Good for vegans or anyone with nut allergies.

✣ ALMOND
No cholesterol, but less calcium than semi-skimmed. Naturally rich in vitamin E.

ALL FIGURES BASED ON A 250G SERVING, UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SPEAK TO YOUR GP. PHOTOS: GETTY

EAT TO BOOST

YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Stave off winter sniffles with these simple recipes, filled with seasonal ingredients to keep you in tip-top condition.

Turmeric roast chicken with orange and fennel

Thanks to its high levels of curcumin, turmeric has powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory qualities. Fennel contains beta-carotene (converted to vitamin A in the body), which plays an important role in protecting organs such as the respiratory tract.

Serves 4
Prep 15 mins
Cook 1 hr 15 mins

1 whole free-range chicken, spatchcocked
125ml olive oil
2 garlic cloves
1tbsp coriander seeds
1tsp dried turmeric or 1tbsp peeled and finely grated fresh turmeric
4 medium sweet potatoes, sliced into rounds
80g dried apricots, roughly chopped
1 orange, thickly sliced
1 bulb fennel, cut into chunks
1 glass of white wine
1 bunch of parsley, roughly chopped
4 spring onions, sliced

1 Blitz the olive oil, garlic, coriander seeds and turmeric together in a small processor or spice grinder. Score the chicken skin a few times, then rub with the marinade. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour or overnight.

2 Heat the oven to 180C Fan/Gas 6. Put the potatoes, apricots, orange slices and fennel in a large roasting tin. Then put the marinated chicken on top, skin side up, and pour over the wine along with as any leftover marinade. Season well and cover with foil.

3 Roast for 30 mins. Remove the foil and reduce the heat to 160C Fan/Gas 4. Roast for another 45 mins, until the chicken is cooked through and golden. Garnish with parsley and spring onions to serve.
Per serving: 831 cals, 33g fat, 6g sat fat, 50g carbs

Coconut, ginger and kaffir lime mussels

Mussels and other shellfish are rich in zinc, iron and selenium. While zinc helps fight off viruses and bacteria, selenium and iron help with producing healthy red blood cells.

Serves 4
Prep 15 mins
Cook 7 mins

2tbsp groundnut oil
4 shallots, finely sliced
2 kaffir lime leaves, very finely sliced
Thumb-sized piece of ginger, peeled and sliced into fine matchsticks
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
4 red chillies, deseeded and finely sliced
400ml can coconut milk
2 tbsp fish sauce
1 lime, juiced
2kg mussels, cleaned
Thai basil or coriander, to serve

1 Heat the oil in a large wok or wide pan with a lid. Fry the shallots over a medium heat for 2-3 minutes, stirring often. Add the lime leaves, ginger, chilli, garlic and cook for a further minute.
2 Pour in the coconut milk, fish sauce and lime juice and bring to a simmer.
3 Add the mussels, put on the lid and steam for 4 mins or so, until all the mussels are open (discard any that stay closed). Serve the mussels scattered with Thai basil leaves, with lime wedges and crusty bread on the side.
Per serving: 359 cals, 26g fat, 16g sat fat, 5g carbs

TIP: Toasting grains until golden before cooking will add depth and nuttiness. Try it with barley, cracked wheat and other grains.

Warm beetroot and quinoa salad with feta and hazelnuts

Quinoa is a complex protein and full of amino acids, which help to cleanse and detoxify the body, while beets, leafy greens and nuts provide a healthy dose of vitamins C and E

Serves 4
Prep 15 mins
Cook 5 mins

15 small beetroot, scrubbed (reserve any tender leaves)
4 large garlic cloves, in skins
200g quinoa (see tip)
400ml vegetable stock
200g feta, roughly crumbled
3tbsp chives, chopped
Handful young beet or chard leaves
50g roasted hazelnuts, roughly chopped

1 Heat the oven to 170C Fan/Gas 5. Wrap the beets and garlic in a large sheet of foil, scrunching to enclose. Roast on a baking tray for 45 mins until the beets are tender. Leave until cool enough to handle, then peel and halve or quarter.
2 Put the quinoa in a large dry frying pan and toast over medium heat, stirring often, until the grains smell nutty and turn a shade darker. Add the stock and bring to the boil. Cover, reduce heat and simmer for 20 mins.
3 For the dressing, squeeze the roasted garlic cloves out of their skins into a bowl. Add the honey and mustard and mix to a paste. Whisk in the vinegar, oils and season well.
4 Toss the warm quinoa with the feta, chives, beetroot, leaves, and half the hazelnuts in a large bowl. Mix with the dressing, then scatter with the remaining hazelnuts to serve.
Per serving: 445 cals, 21g fat, 8g sat fat, 41g carbs

CREDITS: COMPILED BY JESS MEYER. RECIPES AND PHOTOS: FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM

9 spoons of superfoods

Need extra energy, a shot of winter immunity or some tummy TLC? These mouthfuls offer a wellbeing boost

There are plenty of ways that your diet can lift you, but knowing what's best to sprinkle on your salad or porridge, or stir through your soup or smoothie, can be confusing – the word 'superfood' is increasingly overused. But among all the hype, there are certain wellbeing spoonfuls that are so nutrient-rich they are a no-brainer when it comes to getting health benefits. From green grasses that beat bloating to wild berries for better sleep and algae that can help tackle lifestyle diseases, here are nine mighty mouthfuls of goodness that our experts recommend.

GOOD-FOR-YOU GRASSES

1 WHEATGRASS

The young shoots of wheat have many health benefits, from helping to lower blood pressure and cholesterol to detoxifying the liver, says nutritionist Shona Wilkinson. 'Wheatgrass also stimulates the thyroid, fighting obesity and indigestion.' So, if you're prone to bloating and gastric problems, take as needed, or regularly if your digestive system is often unhappy.

2 BARLEY GRASS

Tired all the time? This could give you a boost. 'It's great for lack of energy, due to its high-nutrient content,' says Shona. 'It's said to have 30 times more vitamin B and 11 times the amount of calcium than cow's milk, nearly five times the iron of spinach and close to seven times the vitamin C in oranges.' Take daily if feeling run-down.

TRY THEM!

golden greens
New Zealand Organic Wheatgrass Powder

Powders are the easy way to get an intake of grasses – add to juice or blend into a smoothie. Try Golden Greens' New Zealand Organic Wheatgrass Powder or Barley Grass Powder (both £14.99 for 250g, greensorganic.co.uk).

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. CHECK WITH YOUR GP OR MEDICAL EXPERT BEFORE TAKING NEW SUPPLEMENTS. MAIN PHOTO: GETTY

SUPER SEEDS

3 CHIA SEEDS

'Chia is high in protein and essential fatty acids, and loaded with minerals,' says medical herbalist and nutritionist Sarah Bowles-Flannery. 'It aids weight loss, as it makes you feel satisfied, helps your mood thanks to tryptophan and omega 3s, and boosts bone density via calcium.' Try one tablespoon a day, or in rotation with other seeds.

4 FLAX SEEDS

Naturopaths love them. 'Rich in omega 3 and 6, and gluten free, they naturally and gently cleanse the bowel,' says Sarah. Flaxseed is great for a sluggish digestion and satisfies appetite so helps with weight loss and supports you during detox. Take one tablespoon daily as an ongoing supplement.

5 HEMP SEEDS

Help with dry skin, fatigue and menopausal symptoms. 'To balance hormones and moods, boost energy and control inflammation, we need all the essential fats for healthy cells and hemp contains omega 9, 3 and 6,' says Sarah. Take one to three tablespoons a day for a health issue, then every few days to top up.

TRY THEM!

Add to soups, salads smoothies, porridge. Try Linwoods Milled Organic Flaxseed (£5.79 for 425g) or Shelled Hemp (£6.49 for 200g), and Chia Bia 100% Natural Milled Chia Seed (£6.99 for 315g) at Holland & Barrett.

Linwoods
Linwoods
Flaxseed

WONDERBERRIES

6 INCAN BERRY

Also known as Goldenberries or Cape gooseberry. 'These provide cell-supporting bioflavonoids, minerals and vitamins, especially A, C and several of the Bs,' says nutritional therapist Nina Omotoso. 'They're high in fibre and contain small amounts of melatonin, the sleep-regulating hormone.' Take when you can't sleep, are getting sick or to keep bowels regular – they have almost three times the fibre of prunes. Eat five to 10 berries now and again, or a handful with a glass of water if constipated.

7 MULBERRY

Delicious fresh or dried, mulberries are intensely sweet. And these fruits are powerhouses of nutrients, essential fatty acids, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals, so will give the body a vitality boost, says natural health practitioner Susan Curtis. 'They're beneficial for eye health and help protect the skin from free radical damage,' she says. Have 10-20g of mulberries daily as an on-the-go snack, in herbal tea like a sweetener, or added to granola and yogurt. Dried mulberry leaves also make an excellent tea.

TRY THEM!

H&B
Dried Goldenberries
ORGANIC
MULBERRIES

Dried is just as good! Try Holland & Barrett Goldenberries (£2.29 for 100g hollandandbarrett.com), and Daylesford Organic Mulberries (£4.10 for 125g, ocado.com).

GREEN GOODNESS

8 CHLORELLA

This is a type of freshwater algae. 'It's packed with protein, vitamins and minerals, and Japanese research suggests it could be effective in fighting lifestyle diseases,' says Shona. 'Chlorella has been shown to reduce body fat and blood glucose levels. It's also a great way of increasing magnesium – known as nature's antidepressant.' If you're managing type 2 diabetes or feel stressed or low, it could help.

9 SPIRULINA

Another green algae, this boasts a better protein level than red meat. 'It's also one of the best-known sources of gamma-Linolenic acid (GLA), an important fatty acid for heart and joints,' says Shona. 'Spirulina is good for anyone who's looking to lose weight healthily as it can help you feel fuller for longer.' There are no hard and fast rules when to take it, but every day won't hurt!

TRY THEM!

naturya
organic
SPIRULINA
powder
Organic Chlorella Powder

Stir a spoonful of protein-rich green algae powder into water, juice or a smoothie. Try Naturya Organic Spirulina Powder (£3.75 for 100g, sainsburys.co.uk) and Raw Living Organic Chlorella Powder (£5.95 for 100g, rawliving.co.uk).

The 1940s diet was based on wholesome, nutritious food

Diet like the OLD DAYS

Take your cue from the 1940s to slim down and feel fabulous

Diet fads come and go, but if you're looking to lose weight and kickstart wellbeing, harking back to the eating habits of the 1940s could be a game changer, according to top nutrition experts.

Back in the Forties, times were hard, and wartime food shortages forced people to adapt their diet. Growing vegetables and rearing hens was more commonplace along with rationing key items. People were forced to make the best of the ingredients available but, despite this, infant mortality levels decreased and the average age at which people died from natural causes increased. Experts agree that the improvement in health was probably due to the Forties diet, which was low in meat and more focused on plant foods.

'Even though diet trends have changed dramatically since the Forties onwards, there are some healthy eating habits from that time that will never go out of fashion,' explains consultant nutritionist Shona Wilkinson, working with nutrigums.co.uk. From reducing your plate size to eliminating calorie counting, we've put together some steps to reinvent your diet the retro way and feel great from the inside out.

MOVE DINNER TO THE DINING ROOM

In the Forties, the scarcity of food meant that meals were relished and dinnertime was usually centred around the table. Fast-forward 80 years and our busy lives mean that we're often running around while chowing down our food, or eating while slouched in front of the TV, which can result in uncomfortable bloating. 'Getting into good habits like structured meals at a table rather than in front of the TV means paying more attention to your food, eating mindfully and feeling more satisfied afterwards. You might find yourself needing smaller portion sizes and not feeling as hungry after a meal around the dinner table,' says Shona.

ELIMINATE SIMPLE CARBS

Fast food as it is today just simply didn't exist in the Forties – food was more nutritious and free from refined sugars. 'Simple carb foods have been heavily processed and many of the nutrients removed, leaving them as empty calories without any of the nutritional benefits,' says Shona. Eat more filling ingredients, such as oats and pulses. These humble food staples are low in cost yet high in nutrients. 'They have a mix of protein and fibre, leading to

WORDS: LOUISE PYNE. PHOTOS: GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP.

Meal times were centred around the dinner table, not the TV

Women were more naturally active during the war years

slower digestion, which will keep you feeling fuller for longer and less likely to snack in between meals,' she adds.

AVOID CALORIE COUNTING

Rewind to the Forties and there was a greater focus on eating wholesome foods rather than meticulous calorie counting. It's important to realise that just because a food is low in calories, it doesn't necessarily mean that it's good for your body. 'Focusing less on calorie counting and more on including more beneficial, nutrient-dense foods in your diet is more likely to lead to healthy weight loss,' says Shona.

GET MOVING

Women were naturally active in the Forties due to lifestyle differences – they spent more time outside, both walking and riding a bike. Modern-day deskbound jobs mean that we're more sedentary than ever, and sitting inside chained to a laptop with zero fresh air or movement can take its toll on our physical health. 'People in the Forties and Fifties generally lived a less sedentary lifestyle than we do today, with the lack of modern technology and fewer desk jobs,' says Shona.

Sitting for eight or more hours per day can make us pile on the pounds, so move more to help counteract the effects of desk-working. Take micro breaks from sitting throughout the day, stretch your legs at lunchtime and try to factor a couple of yoga or Pilates sessions into your working week to offset any desk-related niggles.

WATCH PORTION SIZES

Today's plates are piled higher than they were during the Forties and, in some cases, the consumption of energy-dense food has doubled. Larger food packaging and bigger tableware, which tempts us to fill our plate, is somewhat to blame. Research shows that there is an 8cm difference between the averaged-sized dinner plate in the Forties and the crockery we use today, which leads to us unconsciously putting more food on to our plates.

'The ongoing effects of rationing meant that people in the UK were used to smaller portions and didn't have the option of fatty fast food,' explains Shona. By using smaller tableware you'll naturally put less on your plate. Downsize to a 22cm plate for meals and divide your food up so that half of the contents are veg, meat or plant-based protein around the size of your palm, and complex carbs roughly a fist size. Cook food in butter or coconut oil for their good fats.

4 HEALTHY RETRO FOODS

These often demonised staple foods can help to keep your diet on track

✢ POTATOES

The humble spud is rich in both potassium and vitamin C. Steam potatoes and leave the skin on for extra fibre. Eat along with a protein source in order to keep you feeling fuller for longer.

✢ EGGS

One egg contains around 6g of protein along with vitamin D, choline and B vitamins to support overall wellbeing. Eat them scrambled, poached or boiled for breakfast.

✢ CHEESE

Cheese contains a mix of fat and protein. Snack on two tablespoons of soft cheese like ricotta, feta and cottage cheese with oatcakes or crackers.

✢ BUTTER

Butter is a good source of fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E and K. Buy grass-fed butter as this has a higher nutritional profile and is rich in unsaturated fatty acids.

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HAIR & BEAUTY

FRESH AND FABULOUS

Kick off 2023 looking and feeling gorgeous. This month we have a masterclass on making skin healthier and happier, we discover the latest make-up tricks and buys, we get our hands on the very best at-home manicure tips and we treat our tresses to some TLC. Beautiful!

PHOTO: GETTY

What works RIGHT NOW?

All the latest beauty trends as we look forward to spring

Blemish buster

Pop a pill, not your spots, for the best chance of banishing blemishes. **Vida Glow Clear Advanced Daily Supplement, £45 for 30 capsules, sephora.co.uk,** is all about inside-out effects, using a trademarked probiotic to improve gut bacteria and reduce breakouts. This works with zinc, vitamin A and nourishing omega-3 fatty acid to deliver clearer skin not just on your face, but other areas like your back and neck too.

CLEAR
ADVANCED REPAIR
VIDA GLOW

SIGNATURE SCENT

JO MALONE
LONDON
DARK AMBER
& GINGER LILY
COLOGNE INTENSE

If you needed an excuse to switch up your scent, take Jo Malone's relaunch of their Cologne Intense fragrances in chic new packaging as your cue. Dark Amber & Ginger Lily, £145 for 100ml, Jo Malone, is the perfect blend of warmth and spice, with notes of black cardamom, black orchid and incense.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE AVERAGE WOMAN IN THE UK SPENDS 13 MINUTES ON HER HAIR ROUTINE EACH DAY*

GET AHEAD OF GOLDEN HOUR

Glowing skin isn't reserved just for summer. Fake it until the clocks go forward with **It Cosmetics CC+ Glow, £37, itcosmetics.com.** It's a fresher take on their original CC+, with a higher percentage of skincare actives including niacinamide and hyaluronic acid. Top with a swirl of **Jones Road Beauty The Best Bronzer, £35, libertylondon.com,** across your forehead, cheekbones and the bridge of your nose to bring instant warmth.

it
YOUR SKIN BUT BETTER
CC+
NUDE GLOW
SPF 40

Save water

It's not just your shower that uses water when washing your hair – it's the first ingredient in most shampoos and conditioners, which not only uses up more of the good stuff, but makes the bottles larger and heavier. **We Are Concentrate's Shampoo and Conditioner Pastes, £14 each, weareconcentrate.com,** are formulated without the addition of fresh water for a more eco-friendly way to lather, rinse, repeat.

WE ARE CONCENTRATE
WE ARE CONCENTRATE

WORDS: JESS BEECH *RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY TANGLE TEEZER. ** RESEARCH BY MINTEL. PHOTO: GETTY

NIGHT WORKERS

Clever creams to overhaul your skin overnight

PLUMP AND SMOOTH

Beauty Pie Youthbomb Biologic Collagen Peptide Cream, £44 for members, beautypie.com
Packed with ingredients including peptides and niacinamide, consider this a reboot for skin that's lost its oomph. Promises plumper, dewier, brighter skin in 60 days.

BRIGHTEN UP

Murad Essential-C Overnight Barrier Repair Cream, £83, murad.co.uk
Pollution can take its toll on our skin, leaving it dehydrated and dull. This nourishing cream cleans up after the day before, restoring vibrancy to your complexion.

SARAH CHAPMAN
London
Digital Rest

REST AND RESET

Sarah Chapman Digital Rest Anti-Fatigue Night Recovery Cream, £57, Cult Beauty
If you can't ban tech from your bedroom, this is the next best thing. It helps to resynchronise the skin so it can fully rest, repair and rejuvenate while you snooze.

83% of UK women wear make-up with favourite products mascara (57%), lipstick (49%) and foundation (46%)**

Healthy happy SKIN

With more and more of us now experiencing sensitive skin conditions, Sarah Cooper-White asks if it's time to be kinder to our complexions

We've all been there – that burning, itching, bright red reaction when you've used something you didn't know you were sensitive to. When it comes to skincare, we all have high hopes. But sometimes the bathroom mirror can greet you with a face that more closely resembles a tomato than the smooth, dewy complexion you were hoping for. Ouch! As a beauty editor, I've had my fair share of red-faced moments when testing new formulas. It's an occupational hazard, often caused by overzealous usage of a new 'miracle' cream that has landed on my desk. Like many 'beauty addicts' I'm a sucker for ingredients that promise fresher, more youthful, peachier skin. But the problem is that many of us (one in three, according to a new Mintel study) now suffers from sensitive skin as a result; from a complexion that's easily irritated to dramatic reactions if you use certain products, skin may even flare up if you feel stressed or unwell. And while our genetics can play their part in what skin type we have, many of these sensitivities are down to a compromised skin barrier, simply from using the wrong products.

In a recent study, 66% of women said they wear less make-up than they did before the pandemic.* But this has put a greater focus on skin health and ensuring our complexion looks its best without the need for too many cosmetics. Tackling problems such as lines, pigmentation, acne or enlarged pores can come at a price, with overuse of high-strength ingredients like acids and retinoids causing all manner of flare-ups, from redness and peeling to extreme dryness.

'The availability of products that promise overnight transformations, coupled with the rise of social media and people documenting their 10-step skincare routines, all results in both the consumer and, more importantly, our skin, being confused and unable to respond appropriately,' explains skincare specialist Jane Scrivner. 'Random application of products designed to replenish, then remove, restore, then resurface, can all leave the skin confused, exposed and vulnerable.'

The essential function of our skin is as a protective layer. As the largest organ in our body, it works like a brick wall between us and our environment, helping to minimise damage from trauma, chemicals and infections.

'But if the cement keeping those bricks together is removed – by abrasive scrubs, retinoids, peels or alcohol-based toners – the skin barrier becomes impaired and this results in increased water loss, leading to dryness, a reduction in skin thickness, and lower levels of protective lipids and ceramides,' explains Dr Lucy Thomas, consultant dermatologist and brand ambassador for Vaseline UK.

'In addition, potential irritants can enter the skin, stimulating nerve endings and causing inflammation.' >>

WORDS: SARAH COOPER-WHITE. PHOTO: GETTY.
*TRENDALYTICS.CO/2021/04/26/2022-BEAUTY-FORECAST

Murad.
HYDRATION
Intense Recovery Cream
Crème régénérante intense
Scientia
CERAMIDE SKIN RESCUE
moisture barrier balm
baume barrière d'humidité
protect, restore & rebuild
2.1US Fl Oz

SOOTHE stressed-out skin

NEW / NOVITÀ
CeraVe
Micellar Cleansing Water
Acqua Micellare
10 FL OZ/295 ml

First things first: if you've had a reaction, how do you deal with it? 'My advice is to not panic,' says Jane. 'When your skin is reactive, the worst thing to do is to change everything. The body is dealing with an irritation, and things will return to normal, but not if you've thrown your skincare out of the window and introduced a whole new routine.'

First, pare back everything in your regime until you work out where the allergy comes from. That means no retinol, no peels and no triple cleansing. Dr Thomas recommends a gentle micellar cleanser and a fragrance-free moisturiser. **CeraVe Micellar Cleansing Water, £11, lookfantastic.com,** contains niacinamide and vitamin B3 to help calm skin. **Scientia Ceramide Skin Rescue, £28, cultbeauty.co.uk,** contains hyaluronic acid, fatty acids and lipids to bolster the skin barrier – use a thick layer as an overnight mask if your skin is ultra-dry. I always reach for **Sudocrem Antiseptic Healing Cream, £3.29, Boots,** at the onset of a reaction. The nappy rash stalwart is a fail-safe way to treat any skin flare-ups. Only apply at night, as it does leave a white cast to your skin. I also love **Murad Intense Recovery Cream, £72, murad.co.uk.** It's pricey but the buttery texture is perfect for redness and peeling.

Try to keep a diary to try to identify any potential triggers. 'Think about any new skincare products, make-up, perfumes, hair or nail treatments, cleaning products or detergents, as these can all be common culprits,' advises Dr Thomas. 'And once identified, avoidance of these triggers is vital.'

4 simple ways to be KINDER TO YOUR SKIN

If your skin is often sensitive or reactive, here are some ways you can try to prevent flare-ups

1

Streamline your routine

If a complicated routine with lots of different ingredients has left your complexion begging for mercy, it's time to go back to basics. Too many acids, retinoids and peels can upset the balance of your skin's natural microbiome, stripping it of important bacteria. Repair your skin barrier with ceramide and humectant-enriched moisturisers, which help to boost oil and water levels. Try **Elizabeth Arden Advanced Ceramide Capsules Daily Youth Restoring Serum, £72 for 60, elizabetharden.co.uk,** an easy-to-use, biodegradable, daily dose capsule to help get skin back on track.

2

Gentle cleansing

Cleansing is one of the most important parts of a good skincare routine, but make your mantra 'less is more'. Squeaky clean is not what you are trying to achieve. 'Skin needs the "acid mantle", the surface acidity of the skin to be in the range of 4.5-5.5 on the pH scale,' explains Jane. 'Foaming washes can push up the skin's pH to alkaline levels, leaving it exposed and open to environmental "dirt" and bacteria.' So go for nourishing cleansers that help to keep water in the skin and the skin's pH levels steady. Try **Caudalie Cleansing Almond Milk, £16, caudalie.com,** which dissolves dirt and make-up without leaving skin with that tight, uncomfortable feeling.

3

Add new products cautiously

Once you have a simple routine that works, 'it's always best to introduce new ingredients one at a time,' advises Dr Thomas. 'Go low and slow, applying small amounts of a new formula, building up gradually. For example, apply something new twice weekly for a couple of weeks, then try it alternate nights and then nightly if tolerated.'

4

Stress less

High levels of the hormone cortisol can trigger sensitive skin issues. 'Stress can redirect blood away from areas such as skin to other places that need a fight- or-flight response,' explains Jane. 'Going back to basics with your routine is key.' **Aromatherapy Associates De-stress Candle, £48, aromatherapyassociates.com** can help you to relax.

CAUDALIE
PARIS
6.7 Fl. Oz
Elizabeth Arden
Elizabeth Arden NEW YORK
ADVANCED
Ceramide Capsules
Daily Youth Restoring Serum
Sérum Quotidien

Balance restored

Products for sensitive skin don't have to be boring. Give your skin back its glow with these champion buys.

Deep cleanse

The right cleanser is vital if your skin is delicate so you don't strip away valuable oils. **Jane Scrivner Nourishing Cleanser, £36, janescrivner.com,** contains organic jojoba oil, which can penetrate deep into the skin's layers to replenish and restore moisture.

Gentle exfoliation

Sensitive skin will still benefit from a gentle exfoliation but steer clear of harsh peels. **Pai Virtuous Circle Ultra Gentle Exfoliator, £29, paiskincare.com,** is a gel formula with 100% natural jojoba beads to gently roll and lift away dead skin without any irritation.

Retinol alternative

Swap your retinoid for natural, plant-based alternative bakuchiol. Studies have found it can have similar skin-rejuvenating effects as retinol without the irritation. Try **Medik8 Bakuchiol Peptide, £49, cultbeauty.co.uk.**

SOS hydration

Alpha-H Vitamin E with 1% Creamed Complex, £46, alpha-h.com, is like an emergency repair for dry, sensitive skin. It promotes healing thanks to a vitamin E complex, macadamia seed oil and evening primrose oil. Layer it under your daily moisturiser.

Daily moisture

A gentle, yet hydrating cream you can use morning and night is essential to stop your skin flaring. **Oodee Nova Illuminating Moisturiser Vitamin C + Buckwheat Sprouts, £55, oodee.com,** is free from 14 food and 16 fragrance allergens, and works to soothe, moisturise and boost the skin.

Beat acne

Salicylic acid is often the go-to for treating acne but it can be irritating if your skin is sensitive. **By Sarah London Ally Blemish Recovery Oil, £39, bysarahlondon.com,** contains salicylic alternative, linoleic acid. This blemish-buster exfoliates, soothes redness and balances the skin without the irritation.

Renew your skin

Reset a sensitised complexion with **Esse 30-day Rewild Your Skin kit, £74, esseskincare.co.uk,** which contains a cleanser, toner, serum, oil and moisturiser, all designed to take your skin back to its roots, thanks to powerful prebiotics formulas.

Body booster

Don't forget to look after the skin on your body too. Hot showers can leave skin prone to irritation, so a daily dose of **Vaseline Instant Dry Skin Rescue, £7.50, Boots,** with its combination of hyaluronic acid and glycerin, will help to combat this.

Nailing IT!

Paint your nails like a pro with these at-home manicure tips

One of the quickest, and easiest, ways to change your look is to do an at-home mani. And while it's tempting to reach straight for the colour, spending just a few minutes prepping your nails will not only make your polish easier to apply but will give your DIY job a professional edge. We asked celebrity manicurist Michelle Class for her best tips and tricks.

COCONUT
cuticle oil
MY MOOD

Cuticle care

Start with cuticles. 'Please don't use cuticle clippers at home,' advises Michelle. 'You can cut away living tissue, which leads to infection. Instead, hydrate them with oil, which is like conditioner for your nails. Put a drop on each and massage all over.' **WE LOVE My Mood Coconut Cuticle Oil, £7, boots.com**

Seche Vite
DRY FAST TOP COAT
14 ML .5 FL OZ

Paint job

'My biggest tip for painting your nails is to make sure you're resting on a steady surface and don't overload your nail polish brush – it will take longer to dry. Wiggle the brush right down to the cuticle line, then pull it in an upward stroke. And always finish with a top coat – it will create a plumping effect, make the shine last longer and ensure the longevity of your mani.' **WE LOVE Seche Vite Dry Fast Top Coat, £9, boots.com**

GROWN ALCHEMIST
BIOLOGICAL BEAUTY
ANTI-BACTERIAL HAND CREAM
CRÈME POUR LES MAINS ANTIBACTÉRIENNE
TEA TREE EXTRACT, CEDARWOOD, YLANG YLANG
EXTRAIT D'ARBRE À THÉ, BOIS DE CÈDRE, YLANG YLANG

Finishing touch

No mani is complete without hand cream, and using one that contains antibacterial ingredients is a savvy and essential buy to keep your skin feeling supple, hydrated and germ free. **WE LOVE Grown Alchemist Antibacterial Hand Cream, £18, lookfantastic.com**

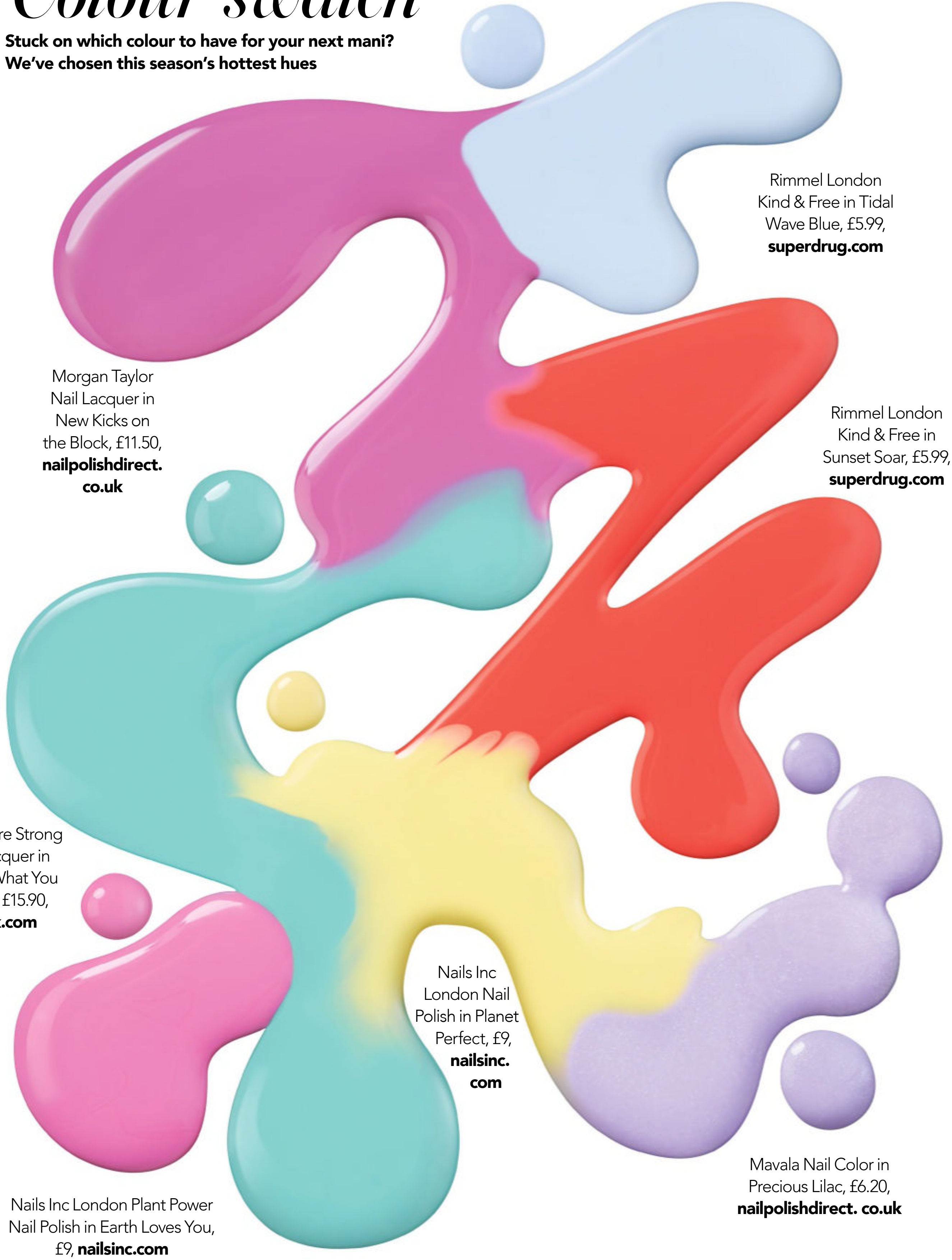
Filing session

Next, create the perfect shape. 'Use nail clippers to take length down, then a file to create shape,' says Michelle. 'Only file your nails in one direction, rather than going back and forth, as this will make the nails weak. And use an emery board – it has a finer grit and is much kinder to the nails.' **WE LOVE Tweezerman Neon Filemates, £7 for a pack of three, tweezerman.co.uk**

TWEEZERMAN
TWEEZERMAN
TWEEZERMAN

Colour swatch

Stuck on which colour to have for your next mani? We've chosen this season's hottest hues



Rimmel London Kind & Free in Tidal Wave Blue, £5.99, **superdrug.com**

Morgan Taylor Nail Lacquer in New Kicks on the Block, £11.50, **nailpolishdirect.co.uk**

Rimmel London Kind & Free in Sunset Soar, £5.99, **superdrug.com**

OPI Nature Strong Nail Lacquer in Cactus What You Preach, £15.90, **opiuk.com**

Nails Inc London Nail Polish in Planet Perfect, £9, **nailsinc.com**

Mavala Nail Color in Precious Lilac, £6.20, **nailpolishdirect. co.uk**

Nails Inc London Plant Power Nail Polish in Earth Loves You, £9, **nailsinc.com**

WORDS: SARAH-JANE CORFIELD-SMITH. PHOTO: PIXELEYES

Make-up made EASY

New year, new look. Step into 2023 with a fresh make-up routine, guaranteed to suit everyone!

ACE YOUR BASE

it COSMETICS

MAX FACTOR X
MIRACLE PURE
SKIN-IMPROVING FOUNDATION
24H HYDRATION
HYALURONIC ACID + VITAMIN C
SPF30 PA+++
93 MOCHA

Winter can leave skin dry and flaky, and a heavy matte foundation will only make matters worse. Freshen up your foundation with something lighter and more radiant, infused with added skincare ingredients to cheat a fresh, healthy glow in an instant.

'Perfect foundation application is all about prepping skin,' says Caroline Barnes, Max Factor's make-up artist and UK ambassador. 'It's important to really feel your face, assessing its needs. On some days it may need different things – one day it might be dehydrated, one day it might be oily – so understand and treat your skin before thinking about make-up.' If it's dry, add a nourishing moisturiser like **Roc Multi Correxion Hydrate & Plump Moisturiser SPF30, £25.19, lookfantastic.com** – you can feel your skin drinking it up as you apply, leaving it feeling instantly plump and bouncy. A primer will also help create the perfect canvas, allowing the foundation to go on smoothly and last as long as possible – we love **E.l.f. Cosmetics C-Bright Putty Primer, £12, Superdrug,** which uses vitamin C to help brighten skin. If you're on the hunt for a new base, try clever launch **Max Factor Miracle Pure Skin-Improving Foundation, £13.99, Boots.** A base with benefits, it's formulated with super-hydrating hyaluronic acid as well as vitamin C to brighten – meaning that skin is being treated while adding buildable coverage. 'I always apply my foundation with my fingers,' reveals Caroline. 'The warmth helps it sink into skin, and I find that it blends in much better for a natural finish. I normally find that using brushes means you just waste more product! But you can always use a brush or a sponge as a final step to complete the look, sweeping over with a light layer at the end.' **IT Cosmetics Heavenly Luxe Complexion Perfection Brush #7, £27, lookfantastic.com,** is a brilliant all-rounder, and has a handy concealer brush at the end. When you're swapping to a lower-coverage foundation, get tactical with concealer – **Anastasia Beverly Hills Magic Touch Concealer, £27, Boots,** works just as well to hide blemishes as it will to make dark circles vanish. Dab into your skin and blend. >>

GET SET

Lock your look in place with a setting spray, to stop your make-up vanishing during the day. Mac Fix It + Stay Over Spray, £14, Boots, makes an impressive difference to how long make-up lasts.

e.l.f.
C-BRIGHT PUTTY PRIMER

RoC
CLINICALLY PROVEN
MULTI CORREXION
HYDRATE + PLUMP MOISTURISER
SPF 30
50ml

ANASTASIA
BEVERLY HILLS

MAX FACTOR X
COLOUR ELIXIR
SOFT MATTE
CT
BOBBI BROWN
Milk MAKE

ADD A POP OF PINK

Spark some joy on grey mornings by adding a bold pink ip. It will add a fancy feel to everyday looks, and there's a shade to suit everyone – be brave!

1 'Prep lips with **Trinny London Miracle Blur, £26, trinnylondon.com**,' advises Caroline. 'It's seriously like a filler for lips, plumping them up, smoothing wrinkles and creating the perfect base for colour.' Bold, matte shades will draw attention to your lips, so it's important to buff away dead skin for a smooth, full pout. An overnight treatment like **Milk Makeup Melatonin Overnight Lip Mask, £21, cultbeauty.co.uk,** will also stop them getting chapped, while working overnight to hydrate and calm.

2 'When it comes to colour, go bold,' urges Caroline. 'Don't be shy – if you go for a paler or sheer formula, it'll look conservative and that's not what this look is about. You can wear bright lipstick at any age, and a blue-toned fuchsia like **Max Factor Colour Elixir Soft Matte Lipstick in Raspberry Haze, £9.99, Superdrug,** will make your teeth look whiter, and even help brighten the whites of your eyes.' For a more muted pink, try the new **Bobbi Brown Luxe Lipstick in Soft Berry, £33, bobbibrown.co.uk.**

PAIR WITH GOLDEN EYES

Hot pink and gold pair so well. Team your statement pout with a shimmery eyeshadow like Charlotte Tilbury Eyes To Mesmerise Cream Eyeshadow in Amber Gold, £21.25, John Lewis & Partners.

3 Caroline has a top tip to stop the colour bleeding or smudging. 'Apply from the inside of your lips, working your way out. It will give a diffused finish, with a concentration of pigment in the middle. Liquid formulas will last longer, and won't dry out your pout.'

WORDS: RHIANNON DERBYSHIRE AND STEPHANIE MAYLOR. PHOTOS (POSED BY MODELS): GETTY

S.
Cream luxe
FENTY BEAUTY
AIR
BREATHABLE
NAIL PAINT
BarryM

THE EYES HAVE IT

If you're not sure where to start with a make-up look, focus on your eyes. Go for metallics and subtle shimmer for daytime, and add fun flicks for evening.

It's easy to get overwhelmed by huge eyeshadow palettes of colours. There's nothing wrong with sticking to one shade – it's far easier to apply! **'Max Factor Masterpiece Mono Eyeshadow in Crystal Bark, £4.99, Boots,** is one of those shades that enhances every eye colour,' says Caroline. 'It's a really soft formula that you could even apply with your fingers – just dab onto the lids. If you have hooded eyes, use the colour underneath the eyes as well as the lids, to help open them up.' To add some depth, go in with a liquid liner like **3INA The 24H Pen Eyeliner 900, £15, Superdrug.** Caroline says, 'If liquid eyeliner and flicks seem intimidating, start by lining the root of your eyelashes, going as close in as possible. This will help lashes look fuller, and you won't have to stress about attempting a cat-eye flick.' Finish off with lashings of mascara – you don't have to spend a lot, most of our favourites are from the high street! **L'Oréal Paris Lash Paradise Mascara, £11.99,** has a chunky brush that provides mega lashes in just a few sweeps.

MAX FACTOR X
3INA
900
THE 24H PEN EYELINER
LASH PARADISE

BOOST YOUR BLUSH

Fun, flattering and feminine – embracing blusher will add a youthful flush. Go for pretty peaches and pinks to lift your complexion and fight fatigue.

Contouring and bronzer has taken over in recent years, but now's the time for blusher to come back with a bang. It has the power to transform the dimensions of your face, helping you look younger and chisel out cheekbones. 'If you want to add fullness to hollow, long faces, apply to the apples of your cheeks, blending with a big fluffy brush,' Caroline says. 'To add definition to a round face, take it underneath, emphasising bone structure, drawing attention to your cheekbones.' Cream textures are more forgiving in the cold weather when skin is dry and rough. Try **Studio London Flaunt Flawless Cream Blush in Captivate, £4, Superdrug,** to pep up a tired complexion. Peach tones are perfect to flatter pale skins – try **Sculpted By Aimee Cream Luxe Blush in Peach Pop, £16, Boots.** It's a silky formula that will go on best by blending with your fingers. Apply to your eyelids and lips, too, for a stylish, monotone look. To add an extra level of radiance, finish off with a highlighter. Caroline says 'I love mixing in a highlighter with blush – it creates a multi-tonal glow that gives you that elevated professional finish. It also stops it looking stripy against the blush and/or bronzes – mix a liquid formula with a powder or cream blush on the back of your hand before applying with your fingers.' We swear by **Fenty Beauty Liquid Killawatt Fluid Freestyle Highlighter in Hu$tla Baby, £24, Boots,** for an unrivalled, multidimensional glow

NAIL YOUR MANICURE

Nothing finishes off a look better than a set of perfectly painted nails. Barry M Air Breathable Nail Paint in Scarlet, £3.99, barrym.com, is ultra glossy and kind to nails, in that dream pillar-box red.

GET GOLDEN ARCHES

Shaped eyebrows have the capability of transforming your entire face – add extra definition and a multitasker like Benefit Brow Styler, £30, benefitcosmetics.com. It adds a tint of colour as well as defining shape.

GREAT *hair* at *ANY* age

The ageing process isn't confined to skin. Stephanie Maylor reveals how to give your hair a facelift with some simple tricks

Dull, rough, flat, thin-looking – no, this isn't a checklist of 40+ skin issues, rather the signs of ageing hair. For some of us, this is a gradual process; for others, it's as if hair transforms overnight, from shiny and swishy to dry and unruly. But these inevitable changes are treatable. The haircare aisle abounds with ingredients usually reserved for anti-ageing skin creams. With the right products, you can turn back the clock on your locks and enjoy full, shiny, beautiful hair at any age.

PROFESSIONAL
SEBASTIAN
DARK OIL
95ml 3.2 fl. oz

Q
Is there a way to enhance shine?

Just as most of us rely on a luminous foundation to reinstate a radiant complexion, we must turn to gloss-giving products to revive our hair's lost lustre. Once we reach the perimenopause, our scalp can produce less oil and natural lipids, so hair may feel drier and look duller. 'I'd recommend introducing more oils into your haircare routine, like **Sebastian Professional Dark Oil, £13, sephora.co.uk,'** suggests Wella Professionals colour trend expert, Zoe Irwin. 'Put a tiny amount in the palm of your hands, work it through wet hair, then blow-dry it in.' If you have fine hair and you're reluctant to use oils, **Amika Top Gloss Shine Spray, £25, loveamika.com,** offers a weightless shine.

Q

Dyeing my hair has left it tired and broken. What can I do?

Colouring hair is a chemical process that alters the structure of the hair strand to let the dye in. Regular colour sessions can leave hair damaged and less likely to hold on to colour. Upgrade your boxed dye to **Josh Wood Miracle System, £29, joshwoodcolour.com,** which includes a permanent colour, a Shade Shot toner and a Miracle Shot. This little bottle offloads a whole lot of lovely vitamins and omegas 3 and 6 to deliver stronger, healthier hair with each dye job.

josh wood colour.
8·0
Dark Blonde
MIRACLE SHOT
shade shot plus

Q

How can I tame frizz?

The main cause of frizz is almost always dehydration. Thirsty hair sucks moisture from the air, causing strands to fluff up. If hair is well hydrated, it won't do this and a regular mask will help. As Zoe says, 'A great mask will improve texture by replenishing moisture loss.' Add **Color Wow Dream Coat, £27, sephora.co.uk,** to your frizz-fighting arsenal. This multi-hyphenate hair hero gives hair a silky finish that repels moisture. For an instant fix, use **Schwarzkopf Got2b Glued 4 Brows & Edges, £5, Superdrug,** to tame flyaways.

Q

My hair is frazzled from years of straightening it. Is it fixable?

As hair ages it's more prone to damage. 'When hair stops producing pigment, it becomes more fragile,' explains Zoe. As few of us are likely to give up our straightening irons or blow-dries, look for products to nurse hair back to health. **Living Proof Restore Shampoo and Conditioner, £25 each, livingproof.co.uk,** strengthens battered hair after one wash.

Living proof
restore
conditioner
Living proof.
restore
shampoo

COLOR WOW
DREAM COAT
SUPERNATURAL SPRAY
Schwarzkopf
got2b

PANTENE
PRO-V miracles
overnight beauty reset
PRO-V
8H ACTIVE SERUM

Q My hair feels like straw. Help!

Hair fibres become more coarse and wiry over the years, and as the scalp produces less sebum, hair turns dry and brittle. Use a deep conditioning mask to restore elasticity. **Philip Kingsley Elasticizer, from £19.50, philipkingsley.co.uk,** is a pre-shampoo treatment that puts the swish back into hair without weighing it down. **Pantene Hydra Glow Overnight Beauty Reset, £19.99, Boots,** is a game-changing serum inspired by skincare science that reinstates the swish of straw-like hair.

PHILIP KINGSLEY
ELASTICIZER
DEEP-CONDITIONING TREATMENT
TRAITEMENT REVITALISANT EN PROFONDEUR

Q My grey hair looks dull and brassy. How can I brighten it up?

With age, our oil glands produce less sebum, which tends to coincide with hairs turning white. This can mean silver hair loses its natural lustre. Sun exposure, pollutants and heated styling tools can leave grey hair with a yellow tinge. Reinstate a crisp tone with a violet shampoo. **Aussie SOS Blonde Hydration Purple Shampoo, £5.99, Boots,** is infused with purple pigment to neutralise brassy tones so grey hair retains its silvery bright hue. If you'd rather leave it to the professionals, try the new Wella Silver Glow, from £20, wella.com, an in-salon treatment to enhance naturally grey hair in 30 minutes. The technology cleverly deposits non-permanent silvery tones that imbue shine and depth.

AUSSIE
SOS
BLONDE
HYDRATION
PURPLE SHAMPOO

Q Why is my scalp dry and flaky?

Beautiful hair begins with a healthy scalp. The skin here is more delicate than on the face. 'Menopause is a time of oestrogen decline, which affects the scalp, causing dryness and increased sensitivity,' says psychodermatologist and Head & Shoulders ambassador, Dr Alia Ahmed. **The new Head & Shoulders DermaX PRO range, from £5.99, Superdrug,** aims to repair the root cause of a flaky scalp, by strengthening the scalp-skin barrier to lock in moisture. For extra hydration after shampooing and conditioning, apply **Head & Shoulders DermaX PRO Repair Scalp Balm, £9.99, Boots,** to target extreme dry spots. Add a touch of luxe to your flake-fighting regime with **Hair Rituel by Sisley Soothing Anti-Dandruff Shampoo, £48, sisley-paris.co.uk,** which rebalances the scalp's ecosystem.

head&shoulders
DERMAX PRO
SCALP CARE
REPAIRING CARE

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

FACE OILS -they're the future

Want plumper, smoother skin? Introduce an oil into your routine

‘Facial oils are emollients and occlusives,’ says aesthetic surgeon Dr Munir Somji. ‘The emollient softens and smooths the outer layer of your skin, while the occlusive forms a protective seal on the epidermis to lock in moisture and strengthen the skin’s barrier.’ Even those with naturally oily or spot-prone complexions can take advantage of the hydrating properties of an oil – you just need to shop smart.

EXTRA HYDRATION FOR DRY SKIN

Adding an oil into your regime will add moisture to your skin and help to keep it there. **No7 Youthful Replenishing Facial Oil, £24.95, Boots** is perfect as it nourishes it without being too greasy. Layer beneath your normal moisturiser when your skin needs extra TLC.

STRESSED OUT SKIN RESCUE

Whether it’s the weather, an allergic reaction or lack of sleep, stressed skin can feel tight and dehydrated. Oil formulas like **SkinSense Hydranet Midnight Oil Concentrate, £30, skinsense.co.uk** that combine antioxidants, such as squalene to protect, and essential fatty acids like ylang-ylang and camomile to restore the skin barrier, are ideal.

PLUMP UP LINES

Look for formulas that contain the ‘wonder oil’ rosehip, which is ultra-nourishing and a glow-giver for dull, drab skin. **Pai Skincare Rosehip Bioregenerate oil, from £16, paiskincare.com,** is five times stronger than your average rosehip oil, loaded with omegas 3, 6, 7 and 9, it also boosts skin repair and regeneration.

FOR SPOT-PRONE SKIN

Not all skin experts recommend an oil if you have spots because they can sometimes block the pores, which leads to breakouts. But if you do want to try one, look for blends with anti-inflammatory oils like **The Ordinary 100% Organic Cold-Pressed Borage Seed Oil, £4.20, theordinary.com,** which helps soothe redness and irritation associated with an angry breakout.

OILY SKIN SOLUTION

Look for formulas blended with salicylic acid to help balance sebum levels. **Trilogy Hemphip Balancing Oil, £23.50, sephora.co.uk,** feels quite ‘dry’ as oils go. It smells citrusy and clean, sinks in fast and leaves skin soft and dewy. Use as a treatment two-three times a week to mop up excessive oily reserves.

WHEN SHOULD I APPLY AN OIL?

Always apply a serum before an oil, but you can experiment with putting an oil under or over a moisturiser. Remember to layer your SPF over oil, and never mix the two together. Blending them could affect the efficacy of your sun protection.

No7
Youthful
Replenishing Facial Oil
Suitable for Sensitive Skin
skinSense by Abi Cleeve
HYDRANET Midnight Oil Concentrate
pai
ROSEHIP BIOREGENERATE
The Ordinary.
trilogy
Hemphip Balancing Oil

WORDS: JESS BEECH AND SARAH COOPER-WHITE
PHOTOS: GETTY

Everyday Keto Baking
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STAY FIT & WELL

YOU DO YOU!

Make this the year you discover your dream workout. There's no point leaping into squats and lunges if you hate them so much you're back on the sofa by spring. With that in mind, how about a new form of triathlon, with shorter, more manageable distances, or a health kick you can share with your partner to put the va-va-voom into Valentine's? We've also found an energy-boosting fitness plan that works whether you take the tortoise or the hare approach to exercise. The choice is yours!

PHOTO: OLIVIA BOSSERT

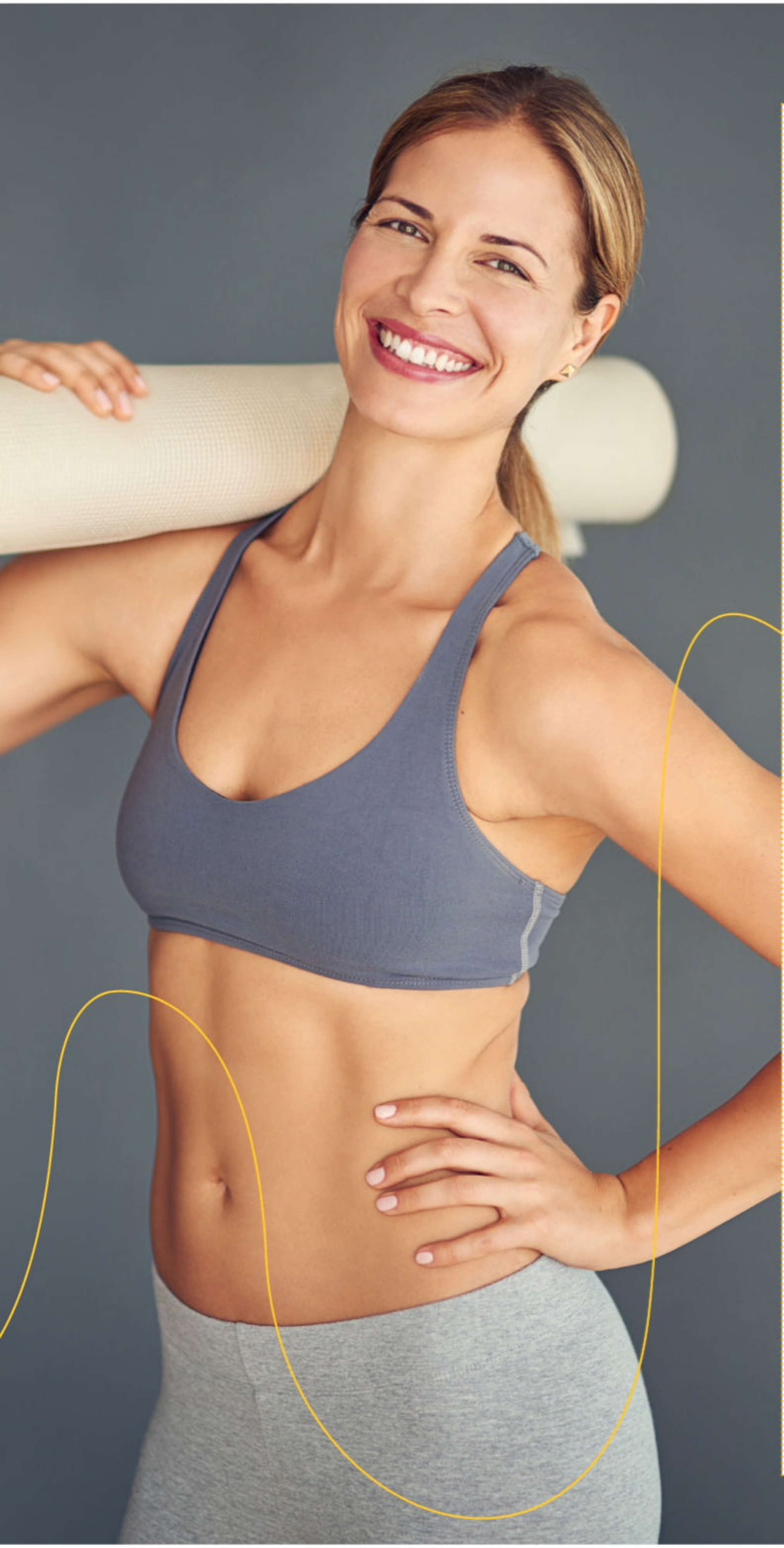
Get your BOUNCE BACK *workout!*

Moves to help you boost your energy – whatever your approach to exercise

Lack of sunlight and a lagging immune system at this time of year can often make you feel like you're running on empty. The good news is you can regain your bounce in no time at all with a gentle or speedy workout – both will boost your energy levels in different ways. And while exercising might be the last thing you want to do at the moment, it's a simple way to replenish those much-needed reserves. Working out will boost blood and oxygen flow around your body, releasing those feel-good endorphins and improving sleep quality and focus. Not only will you get fitter and tone up, you'll soon be brimming with new-found energy and enthusiasm.

WHAT TO DO

With our gentle wake-up workout, you'll fake a full eight hours of sleep and ease into your morning feeling energised. Need something high-impact? Our speedy workout will really get your blood pumping to supercharge your day – in just 15 minutes. Do either workout or a combination of both, depending on how you feel, at least three or four times throughout the week to see a difference in your vitality levels.



REVAMP YOUR ROUTINE

These daily energy-boosting tricks will help you get your oomph back

+ NO SNOOZING

Get up when your alarm goes off. 'Falling asleep again will leave you feeling groggy because you've put your body and brain out of sync with their natural rhythm,' says nutritionist Rob Hobson.

+ BOOST YOUR BREAKFAST

Eggs are a great source of energy-boosting protein. Oats will also keep you fuelled until lunch. 'Add walnuts and linseeds to porridge for slow-release energy. Toss in berries and sultanas for natural sweetness,' says nutritional therapist Laila Lewis.

+ FIX YOUR POSTURE

Slouching is a fast track to sleepiness. 'Correcting your posture can get more oxygen into your body,' says physio Sammy Margo. 'Sit tall, as if you have a string coming from the top of your head to your tailbone, with stomach muscles pulled in and ribcage lifted. Breathe into your ribcage, with legs uncrossed for good circulation.' Do this for five minutes every two hours.

+ HEAD OUTSIDE

When afternoon tiredness hits, head out for a short walk. It increases oxygen flow and stimulates energy-boosting hormone levels. Women who walk briskly for 10 minutes a day have 18% more energy after six months than their couch-bound peers, says the American Heart Association.

+ SNACK SMART

Avoid sugary treats. 'If you need an afternoon pick-me-up, have berries or a few squares of 70% dark chocolate, which contains a small amount of caffeine and a touch of sweetness, without the sugar crash,' says nutritionist Clarissa Lenherr.

+ RESET YOUR BEDTIME

Late nights can become a habit, but there is some truth to the adage that one hour's sleep before midnight is worth two hours after. The earlier hours are usually when your body restores and renews itself, so hit the sack well before 11pm. >>

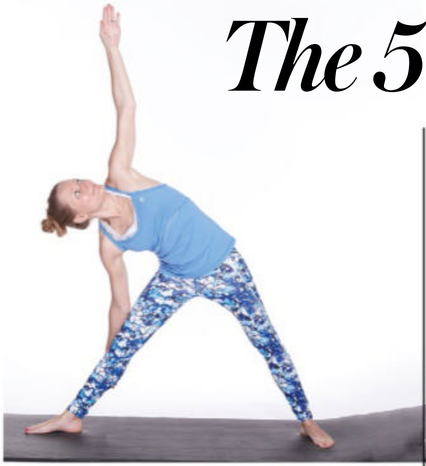
YOUR GENTLE WORKOUT

Find it hard to unwrap yourself from the comfort of a duvet when it's dark, cold and miserable outside? There's a reason you find it hard to get going first thing. 'Your body has been still for seven to nine hours, so it's no surprise you feel groggy and your joints and muscles are stiff,' says Kira Mahal, founder of MotivatePT.

But our mini yoga workout could be the key to feeling invigorated in the morning. 'This routine will wake up your body and your mind,' says Kira. 'As you start to move, blood will pump around your body, increasing oxygen levels to your brain, making you feel alert.'

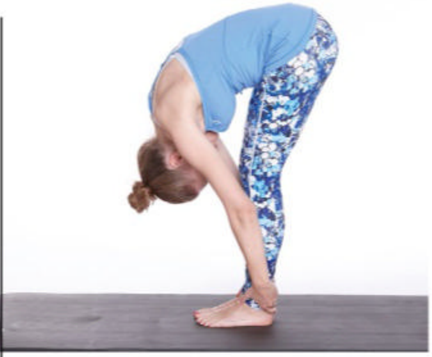
It will also warm up your synovial fluid, which helps your joints to move smoothly. And by stretching each muscle, you'll help to relieve tension and maintain flexibility. What's more, you'll feel calm first thing, and more than ready to face a busy day ahead.

The 5 moves



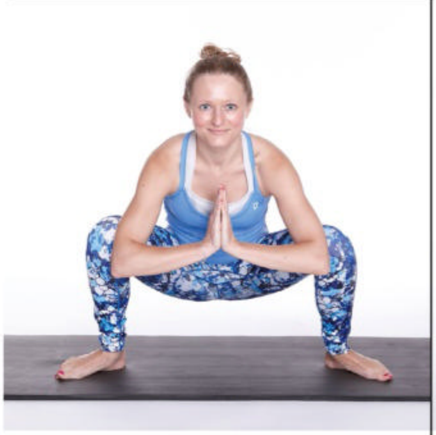
TRIANGLE POSE

From standing position, with legs about 3ft apart, turn right toes outwards. Inhale, and press left hips out to the left as you slide both arms to the right, parallel to the floor. Exhale, rotate arms, raising left arm up and resting right hand on right leg, palms forward. Reach fingertips away from each other, bringing arms into a straight line. Hold for 3-6 breaths.



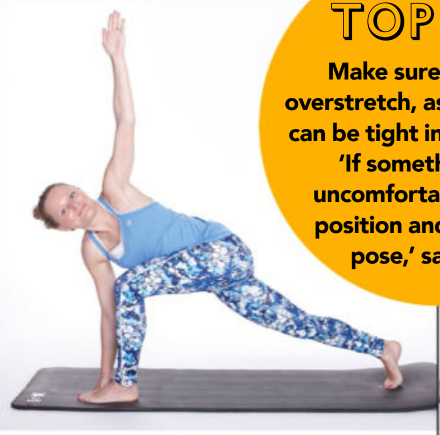
STANDING FORWARD BEND

Exhale while bending forward at hips and lengthen your torso. Keeping your knees straight, place your palms on the backs of your ankles, or cross your arms and hold your elbows. Then, let gravity pull you down while breathing deeply and hold for 30 to 60 seconds.



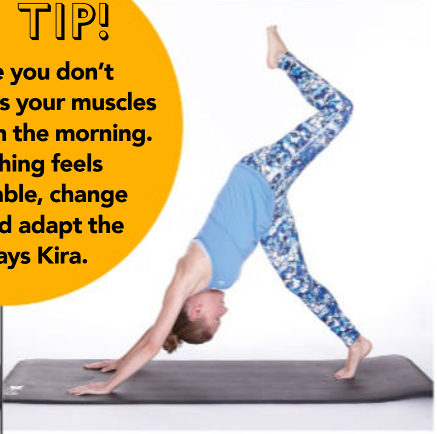
MALASANA YOGA SQUAT

Stand with feet slightly wider than hip-width apart, toes pointing outwards. Squat as deep as you can and bring your elbows to the inside of the knees and bring palms together. Use your elbows to push knees apart, and hold the pose for 30 to 60 seconds.



LUNGE TWIST

In downward dog, exhale and bring left foot forward and place it between your hands. Bend left knee to a 90 degree angle. Place right hand next to your left foot. Lift your left arm towards the ceiling by rotating the upper body to the left. Gaze upwards. Hold for 30-60 seconds, repeat on the other side.



HIP OPENER

Starting in downward dog, lift your left leg towards the ceiling, foot flexed and hips level. Bend your left knee and let your heel move towards your hip. Hold for 15-30 seconds and repeat with the other leg. Return to downward dog before walking your hands to your feet. Slowly curl up to a standing position.

TOP TIP!

Make sure you don't overstretch, as your muscles can be tight in the morning. 'If something feels uncomfortable, change position and adapt the pose,' says Kira.

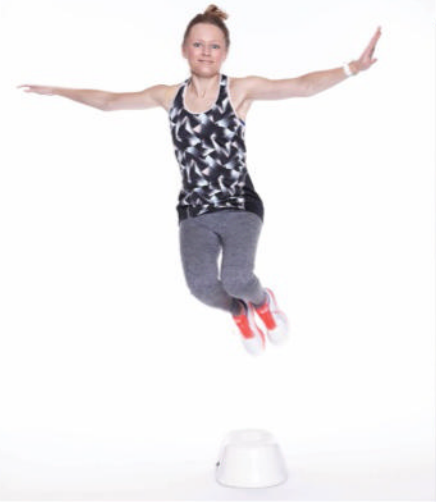
PHOTOS: FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM, GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP

YOUR SPEEDY WORKOUT

Nothing dials up those happy hormones like a high-intensity interval training (HIIT) session, according to a study at the University of Turku in Finland. 'The release of endorphins triggers a happy feeling in your body and mind, giving you the opportunity to re-energise,' says fitness trainer Dominik Rzadowski.

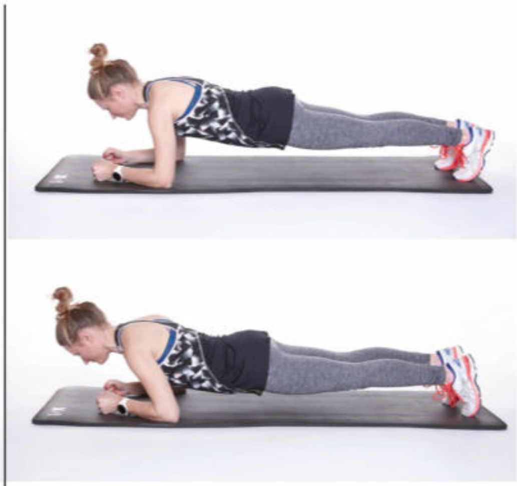
This fast and furious at-home plan will help you burn fat, increase endurance and leave you feeling more energised. Plus, these moves are great if spare time is limited as you can trim, tone and turn up your energy supply in just 15 minutes. 'This workout will also increase aerobic and anaerobic capacity (exercise with and without oxygen) and improve your stamina,' says Dominik. Get ready to feel invigorated – and lose inches.

The 5 moves



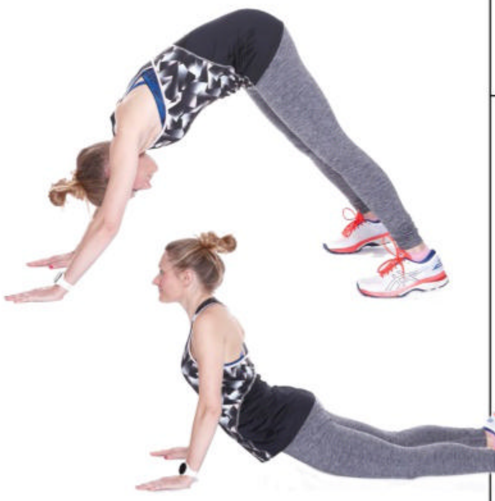
FLOOR HOP-OVER

Use a towel or a box as your 'hop over' marker. Keeping feet together, bend your knees and jump over your marker to the other side. Land with bent knees. Try three sets of 10-12 reps.



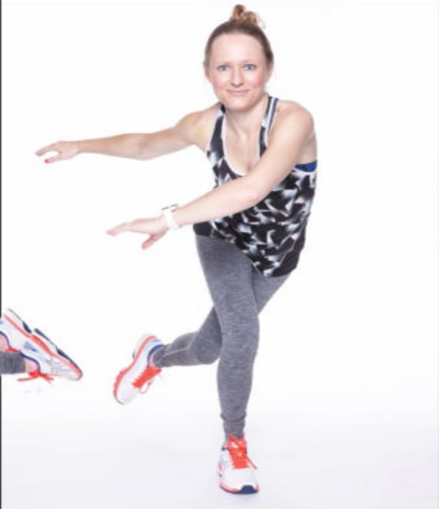
FRONT BRIDGE ROCK

Perform a plank with weight resting on forearms and balls of feet. Slowly rock your body forward over your forearms, then rock back. Try it for 10-30 seconds.



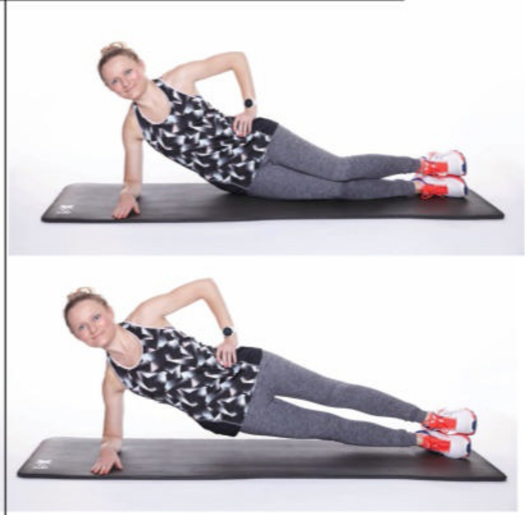
DIVE BOMB PUSH-UP

Get on all fours with your feet hip width apart and hands shoulder width apart. Push hips up as high as possible, so you resemble an inverted V. Keep back flat with arms and legs straight (knees unlocked). Lower your hips, keeping legs straight, but allow arms to bend as you push forward. Push through hands to full arm extension. Try 5-10 repeats.



ICE SKATER

Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Hop on to your right foot, while bringing left leg behind right leg. At the same time, swing your left arm out in front and right arm behind. Switch sides, hopping to the left and repeat the move. Try three sets of 10-12 reps.



SIDE BRIDGE

Lie on your side and support your body with your forearm and your feet. Lift your hips up to create a straight line all the way down your body, then lower back down. Try three sets of 10-12 reps.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

It's time to get outside, explore and find your next adventure

Technical jacket, £135, sizes xs-xl, **roxy-uk.co.uk**

Available in half sizes

Boots, £190, **vionicshoes.co.uk**

Gloves, £30, **columbiasportswear.co.uk**

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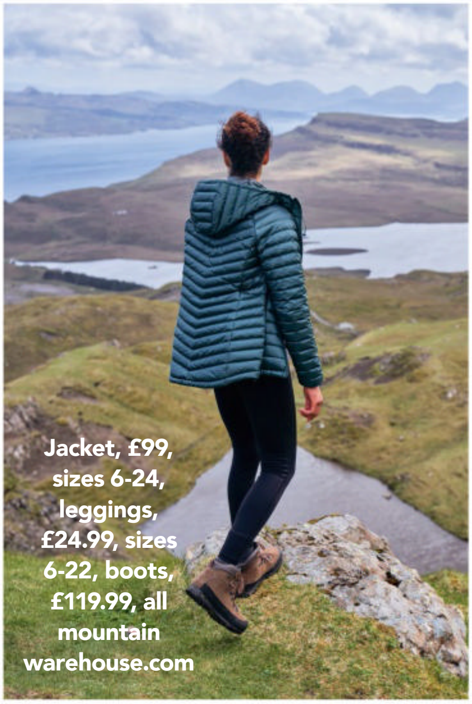
Reflex Active series 6 smart watch, £50, **Very**

Thermal top, £22, sizes 8-22, **pourmoi.co.uk**



Jacket, £99, sizes 6-24, leggings, £24.99, sizes 6-22, boots, £119.99, all mountain warehouse.com

Socks, £18, **Falke at toa.st**

Cross body bag, £45, **sweatybetty.com**

Thermal jumper, £34.99, sizes s-xl, thermal coat, £119, trousers, £34.99, both sizes 10-28, boots, £69, all **damart.co.uk**

Jumper, £32, sizes xs-xxl, **next.co.uk**

Thermal leggings, £22, sizes 8-22, **pourmoi.co.uk**

Like a second skin

Trainers, £125, **sorelfootwear.co.uk**

Top, £19.99, sizes xs-4xl, gilet, £99.99, sizes 8-22, leggings, £24.99, sizes 6-22, hat, £12.99, all **mountainwarehouse.com**

Cosy funnel neck

Gilet, £35, sizes 6-24, **Goodmove at marksandspencer.com**

Thermal top, £14.90, sizes xxs-xxl, **uniqlo.com**

COMPILED BY: BECKY JOINER-O'RIORDAN

Workout, *recover,* REPEAT!

Don't let sore muscles slow you down – here's how to speed up your recovery so you get stronger, faster

If you're working out, jogging or walking a couple of times a week, on the other days you can just rest, right? Wrong. Quality rest is certainly part of the picture, but if you want to reach your potential and stay injury-free, you need an effective recovery regime – especially if you're a beginner to exercise.

It's especially important at this time of year, says fitness trainer Emily Rutherwood of FS8 Studio. 'Physical and mental health often takes a battering during winter, due to cold weather, SAD (seasonal affective disorder), and weakened immunity. Ensuring proper recovery during these months will help you stay on track.'

Whether you've started weightlifting, are running further or faster, or have stepped up your Pilates practice, recovering correctly means easing any muscle soreness so you're ready and raring to go by the time your next session arrives.

It also means checking in with any niggling aches and pains, and if they feel aggravated, swapping a more intense session for some gentle movement to avoid potential injury.

If you've just picked up a new sporty hobby or workout routine, here's why you should dust off that foam roller – and try the other effective recovery methods that our experts swear by. >>

WHY WE GET SORE

Any muscle soreness you feel 24 to 72 hours after exercise is called delayed onset muscle soreness, or DOMS. These aches don't show up after all workouts – only when you do new or intense exercises that your body isn't accustomed to. And it happens to everyone, from beginners to professional athletes. 'It isn't an indication that you've done something wrong,' says sports medicine physician Dr Michael Jonesco. 'It shows that you've stretched your body to the point that you've caused muscle changes.'

Those changes begin during exercise. Muscle contractions cause microscopic tears along the muscle and nearby connective tissues. These tiny tears don't directly cause the soreness; the pain is a side-effect of the muscle repair process. Your bodily systems work together to trigger both healing and pain.

KEEP MOVING

It's important you respect your body and listen to it when it says it's hurting. If you're injury-free but struggling with DOMS, this doesn't always mean complete rest, however. 'Very light – and I emphasise light – exercise can get blood flowing and help loosen your muscles,' says Dr Jonesco. This is called active recovery.

'Active recovery, like walking, swimming or a gentle cycle ride, works as efficiently to ease pain and strengthen muscles as self-massage or electrical muscle stimulation, according to a recent study,' says Jodie Breach, physiotherapy national lead at Nuffield Health. 'It's a cheap and easy option.'

WHEN TO WORRY

If your pain lasts longer than a couple of days, you may have an injury and you should rest and seek professional help. Remember that you don't have to be in debilitating pain in order to have physiotherapy – 'prehab' is a better option. While minor complaints that come and go might not significantly affect your quality of life right now, they may snowball into something worse if not addressed.

Beware of extreme muscle soreness. Pain that is so severe that it prevents you from lifting a limb may indicate a more serious type of muscle injury that can lead to kidney damage. If your soreness doesn't improve, or if your urine turns a black tea-like colour, that's a red flag indicating that you need to see a doctor.

RECOVER LIKE A PRO

We asked our experts for their favourite, tried-and-tested exercise recovery methods – and most of them cost very little...

START THE DAY WITH A GLASS OF LEMON JUICE IN WATER

'Staying hydrated is important as it helps muscle soreness by flushing out the lymph system, as well as moving essential nutrients through the body,' says yoga coach Danielle Wills at fitness app WithU. 'The vitamin C in citrus fruits is an antioxidant that can also speed up tissue repair and muscle recovery.'

REFUEL RIGHT

'I make sure my post-workout meal or snack is high in protein and carbs to help replenish my muscle glycogen,' says personal trainer Aroosha Nekonam at Ultimate Performance. Keep it simple. 'This could be Greek yogurt with fresh berries or pitta bread with peanut butter or feta cheese.'

SUPPLEMENT WITH MAGNESIUM

'Magnesium can improve muscle and nerve function, reduce DOMS and promote better rest, so your body can mend while you sleep,' says Danielle. Try **Puro Magnesium from Purolabs (£29.99 for 90 capsules, purolabs.com).**

TRY A 'CONTRAST' SHOWER

'Start hot, then finish with a 1-2 minute cold burst,' says Danielle. 'It sounds awful, but it's so worth it because it increases circulation and blood flow to all the muscles that have worked hard. It can also reduce joint inflammation.'

GET AN EARLY NIGHT

Don't underestimate the power of good sleep. 'Cut back on alcohol and caffeine and get to bed earlier by saying no to Netflix,' says professional trail runner and coach Jon Albon.

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COLD WEATHER CONCERNS

When it's chilly outside, it's even more important to warm up and cool down properly. 'Cold weather causes your muscles to contract and be less elastic, which can increase the risk of injury when you exercise,' says personal trainer Chris Ward. Warming up will help to reduce muscle soreness, while cooling down allows for gradual muscle recovery and helps to regulate blood flow.

Start from the ankles and work up, so you don't leave anything out. 'When possible, dynamic stretching should always be your focus before you exercise,' says Emily. These are active movements like lunges, squats, calf raises and ankle or shoulder rolls.

'During a cool down, static stretching allows you to catch your breath and focus on each individual body part,' says Emily. This means holding each pose for 30-60 seconds, for example stretching your hamstrings by reaching for your toes or stretching your quads by standing on one leg and then bringing your other heel towards your bottom.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. PHOTOS: GETTY.

Ready to roll?

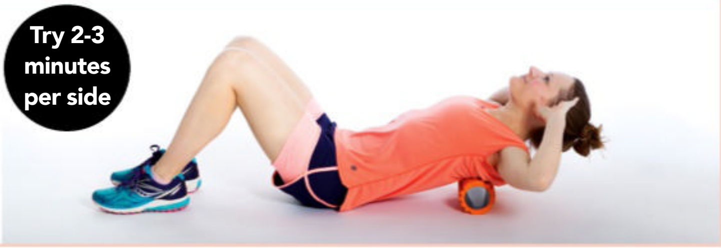
Another way to speed up the recovery process is to try foam rolling. 'It's worth getting into a foam rolling routine as the first couple of times can be quite painful,' says women's fitness specialist Rosie Stockley of mamawell.org. It works almost like a massage, kneading out knots and tight areas, she says.

So how do you know which muscles to work on? 'Once you apply your weight to the roller, the areas of tension will show themselves by being painful – these are the spots you need to spend the most time on,' says personal trainer Dave Jordan, founder of The Fitting Rooms in London. Here's how to safely use your roller on five key body areas.

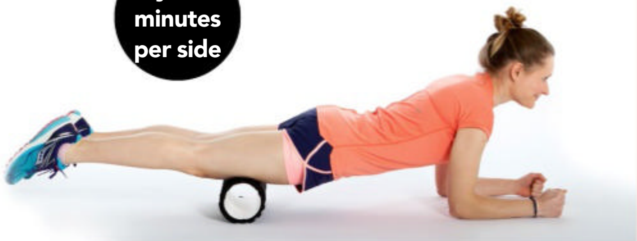
UPPER BACK

Helps to ease tension out of the majority of the muscles in the upper back but, more importantly, helps us to reverse the process of sitting in a forward-hunched position all day at our desk.

Try 2-3 minutes per side



Try 5-10 minutes per side

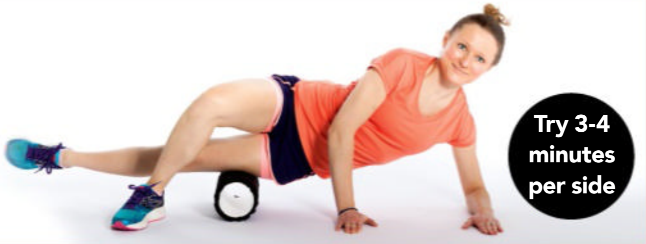


QUADS

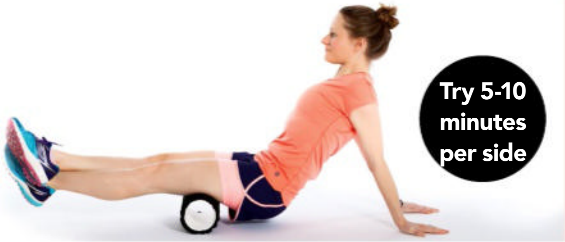
Lie face down and apply pressure to the front of your thigh – this releases muscles in your quadriceps, particularly the rectus femoris. When tight, these muscles can lead to knee pain, which, with a little foam rolling work, can be eased off.

OUTSIDE OF THE THIGH

The outside of the thigh can get very tight from weight training, but more commonly through repetitive running or jumping. This leads to an imbalance in the muscles leading into the knee which pulls your patella (kneecap) out of alignment. This can lead to severe knee pain.



Try 3-4 minutes per side



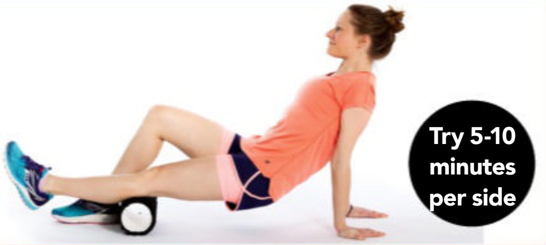
Try 5-10 minutes per side

HAMSTRINGS

Most of us suffer from tension in our hamstrings and foam rolling can help restore function and help with flexibility. It can be difficult to get enough pressure here, so cross one leg/ankle over the other to apply more of your body weight.

CALVES

Ankle mobility affects exercise performance as well as the depth of your squat. Plus, it can also contribute towards pain in the Achilles tendon. Rolling your calves will improve this. Calves respond better with the added weight of the opposing leg crossed over the top too.



Try 5-10 minutes per side

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BARGAIN BUY
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BUM SCULPT
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PLUS SIZE
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BUILT-IN POCKET
£65, sizes 8-22, Under Armour at simplybe.co.uk

FOUR-WAY STRETCH
£28, sizes xs-xl, gap.co.uk

COMPILED BY: HANNAH HUGHES

W&H FITNESS GURU

The skinny on PROTEIN

Our expert Annie Deadman explains what protein does and why we need more of it

I'm going to shout this bit. Protein is VITAL for our bodies, even more so as we get older, and it's not just about keeping fat levels down… (but yes, I'll talk about that, too). First, we're going to look at how it makes our bodies beautiful.

Brace yourselves for some background. Every single cell of our body is made up of protein. The enzymes involved in the thousands of chemical processes in the body (digestion, metabolism, energy production) are proteins. Proteins help transport nutrients, they build up our immune system (COVID… ahem… just throwing that in there), and they repair muscles, hair, skin and nails. Collagen, the stuff that gives our skin its elasticity – that's a protein, too. Look at your leg muscles – they're attached to the hip and knee by tendons and ligaments. All of that is made of protein. Protein is therefore the second most abundant compound in our body (the first is water). Have I said the word protein enough?

Stay with me… nearly finished the boring bit. Proteins are made up of 20 amino acids, and eight of those we need to get from our food; the rest are formed within the body. That means eating fish, tofu, meat, eggs, milks, yogurt, nuts, seeds, pulses and, yes, even bread and oats, which have some protein.

Among the signs you're not getting enough are slow-healing wounds, fatigue, constant illness and weak nails.

That's all very well, I hear you say, but how much protein should I have each day? It depends on your lifestyle. The more active you are, the more you will need. The recommended amount per day is currently 0.75g of protein per kilo of body weight. I'm 61kg so that means I should have 45g of protein per day (which is roughly one 200g bowl of high-protein natural yogurt and a 100g chicken breast). BUT if you're like me and have your sights set on an active old age, want to have well-supported joints, a good level of strength, half-decent skin and hair, and keep fistfuls of love-handle fat to a bearable minimum, then you will need much more protein than that. Read on.

> 'It will keep you full without the need for a nap'

Having toned, dense muscles will mean your metabolic rate increases (the rate at which you burn calories during the day). That means using them, possibly even challenging them. We're not talking Olympic weightlifting, just a regular dose of strength training.

Moreover, eating more protein keeps you full (it switches off the hunger hormone ghrelin), so you'll be less likely to snack. A two- to three-egg omelette filled with ham and feta cheese for lunch will have far fewer calories than that baguette and crisps. And it will keep you full without the need for an afternoon nap. It's all a win-win so far.

Muscle is a tissue we need for our health now and into our golden years. Keeping it toned (and metabolically active) means using it and feeding it with protein. As we age, we lose muscle because our appetites reduce (allegedly… not showing any signs so far), and then our muscles wither. Joints become fragile and unstable. Cheery, I know.

So Deadman's Protein Charter is this: for a healthy, strong, active life USE those lovely muscles and then FEED them! Aim for 1-2g protein per kilo of your body weight per day, depending on your activity levels (I'm on around 120g per day), men might need more. Tot up how much you eat each day and I think you'll find it most revealing.

An easy way to make up the total you have set yourself is through supplement protein powders (and no, they're not just for beefcakes at the gym). Dare do a lovely cocoa and peanut butter version (£27, daremotivation.com), and mixing two scoops with water packs in 20g of protein. Fizzing metabolism, full tummy and happy hormones coming your way!

+ Annie is a fitness coach and author of *The 21 Day Blast Plan* (HarperCollins). Her fat-loss programme (theblastplan.com) helps women gain confidence and shed inches. Follow her on Instagram @anniedeadman for deals and discounts.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. CHECK WITH YOUR GP OR MEDICAL EXPERT BEFORE TAKING NEW SUPPLEMENTS. PHOTOS: ANGELA SPAIN, GETTY

Give it a TRI!

With a super-sprint or 'mini' distance triathlon, you can take on the swim-bike-run trio and become a triathlete too

Forget the Ironman, which sees competitors cover inconceivable distances. A super-sprint race is far more fun, and within arm's reach: it's usually a 400m swim, a 10k bike ride followed by a 2.5k run.

'Triathlon is much more accessible than people think. As long as you have a bike, a swimsuit and some running trainers, you can get involved,' says professional triathlete Rosie Weston, ambassador for INCUS Performance*. 'There are beginner-friendly triathlons called GO TRI events (gotri.org), where it's common to breaststroke the swim, cycle on a mountain bike and walk large portions of the run course.'

More women are taking up the challenge – in 2018 over half of the GO TRI online community were female**. Curious to know if you could do it? Here's the lowdown.

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

Lots of women enter the sport because they already love to swim, cycle or run. This makes training easier, as aerobic fitness transfers between disciplines. However, it is possible to start from scratch if you give yourself enough time to prepare, says triathlon coach and personal trainer Simon Webster from the Goodwood Health Club. 'Gradually increase your load until you are doing cardiovascular exercise at least three times per week for a minimum of 20 minutes each time.'

Try to tick off one run, one ride and one swim. Then, depending on which distance you're taking on, build your endurance from there. Stay as consistent as you can, rest when your body is tired and have a 'taper' (easier) week before the race. 'Once you're confident in each element separately, doing them all together won't feel so daunting,' adds physiotherapist and endurance athlete Lucy Sacarello at lucytriphysio.com

CHOOSE YOUR CHALLENGE

- **Super-sprint/Mini: 400m swim, 10k bike, 2.5k run**
- **Sprint: 750m swim, a 20k bike, 5k run**
- **Olympic/Standard: 1.5k swim, 40k bike, 10k run**

JUST KEEP SWIMMING

If you think you're not a natural swimmer, this may be the most intimidating part. Fortunately, many shorter races use pools rather than the sea or a lake, which takes away some of the fear factor. 'Either way, I would always recommend doing most of your

SCARED TO GO SOLO? Most races also include the option of entering as part of a relay team of two or three.

CYCLE

swim training in a pool,' says Simon. 'Once you progress, you can seek out supervised local open-water swims.'

Even in the pool many beginners struggle with shortness of breath and panic. 'Focus on exhaling slowly when your face is underwater,' says Rosie. 'When you raise your head to breathe, you only need to inhale rather than rushing to take a full breath in and out.'

If you're already a seasoned swimmer but want to up your pace, hire a coach for a one-to-one session. They'll identify ways to improve your stroke efficiency.

PEDAL POWER

Whatever distance you pick, the bike section is always the longest, which means any speed gains you can make here will have the biggest effect on your overall time. That doesn't mean you need to be doing gruelling long rides every weekend, though, especially if you've entered a super-sprint. 'Don't set yourself up to fail with an unrealistic training schedule,' says Simon. 'Use your bike as a mode of transport, and time in the saddle will quickly stack up.'

If you're a nervous cyclist, choose a closed road race, where there is no traffic. 'If you do race on an open road circuit, abide by the highway code and race with caution,' adds Rosie.

LACE UP

The most difficult bit about the run section is overcoming the 'jelly-leg' sensation often felt as you set off on foot from your bike. To minimise this, 'include "brick sessions" in your training, where you complete a short run immediately after a bike training session,' says Rosie. These help to prepare and adapt your body.

TRANSITION TIPS

There are two transitions in a triathlon: swim-bike and bike-run. The idea is to have all your kit ready to go, so you can move between disciplines as quickly as possible. Before the event, 'read all the information provided by the organiser, so you can focus on setting up calmly when you arrive, rather than feeling overwhelmed and stressed,' says Simon.

FRIENDLY COMPETITION

Our experts offer their top tips for race day…

✢ **EMBRACE YOUR NERVES**
'It's normal to feel nervous – your body is just getting physiologically ready to perform,' says Lucy.

✢ **PREP YOUR BIKE**
Make sure your bike is in the right gear before you rack it in the transition area. 'Take a look at the start line to see if it is on a flat bit of road or a gradient and make gear adjustments accordingly,' says Rosie. This ensures a smooth, speedy start to the bike section.

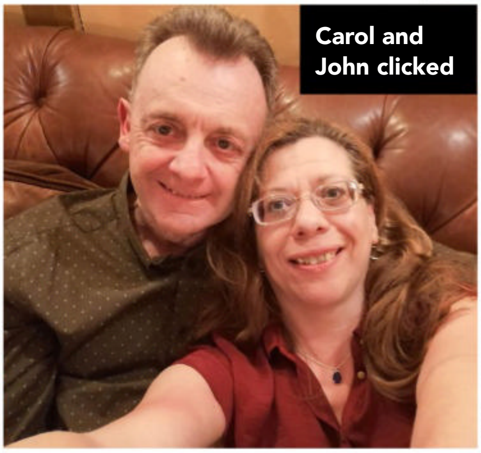
✢ **UPGRADE YOUR TRAINERS**
'Swap in some elastic laces so you can quickly and easily slip your feet in,' advises Rosie.

✢ **TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF**
'Enter your first race with no expectations. Don't worry about your times,' says Lucy. Just soak up the atmosphere and have fun!

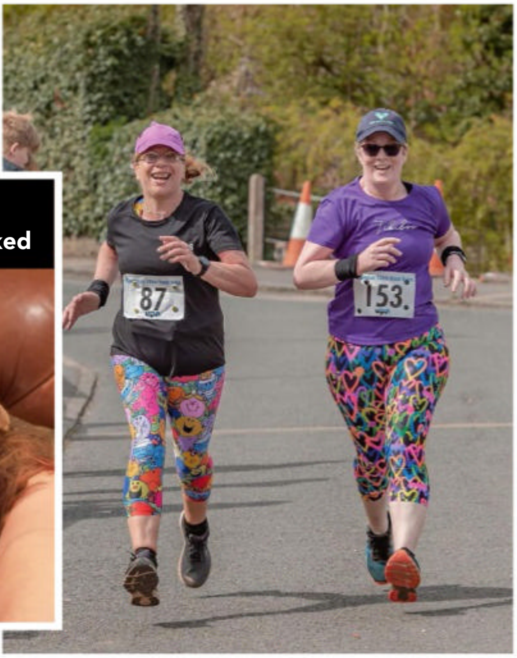
IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. WORDS: JENNY ROWE. PHOTOS: GETTY. *INCUSPERFORMANCE.COM **BRITISH TRIATHLON

LOVE
Our unexpected exercise bonus

Fitness can come with many benefits – whether it's boosting your own self love or finding passion with a partner



Carol and John clicked



Carol runs and John takes the photos

'I met the love of my life at Parkrun'

Carol Dean, 51, from Northamptonshire, is a full-time carer

'A few years ago, my mental health took a huge nosedive. After my father died in 1994, my mother started relying heavily on me for everything, so I quit my job and even avoided friendships and relationships to be her full-time carer. The only thing that really brought me any joy were my five whippets and one lurcher.

The dogs meant everything to me, so when they started to get old and inevitably pass away I was left bereft. Saying goodbye to Beau especially was like losing a child, and his loss left me unable to get up. I'd spend weeks on the sofa watching daytime TV – I felt so low.

My friend Jason had been trying to persuade me to run, as it had helped him with his mental health, but I'd always said no. I'd never been a runner, I couldn't start at 48! But with little else to get up for, I conceded, agreeing to "just try" Couch to 5K.

To my surprise, I liked it! I loved the virtual medal at the end of each section, and that achievement saw me through to week seven when I finally found the courage to try the local Parkrun. I felt so self-conscious and it was physically hard, but having something to focus on kept me going. As I began to go more regularly, I recognised more people. Eventually, there was a group of women I'd chat and run with (the Run Mummy Run group). I'd also wave at the event's photographer, John, who would be there each week, snapping the runners.

I began to look forward to getting out of the house and seeing these new friends, and we all swapped numbers, chatting throughout the week. It was during one of these exchanges that I found out that John's birthday was coming up, but he didn't have plans. So I suggested we meet for coffee. We didn't stop talking over that latte, but it never even crossed my mind that there might be anything in it – until I got home to find he'd already messaged to ask if he could take me out that night!

'I sometimes grab John's hand as I jog past'

After that, we began to spend more and more time together, going on long walks in the countryside and taking trips to the coast. He even took me on my first holiday in 20 years! Having a relationship was so new to me, but everything felt easy with John. We just clicked.

John doesn't run – although I've tried to make him by grabbing his hand as I've jogged past – but he supports my love for it. I did the marathon last year and am always on the lookout for a new running challenge around the country – but only if there's a decent medal up for grabs!

I support his love of photography too, walking for hours to find a lesser-spotted butterfly for him to snap or posing in wheat fields as his portrait model. After losing my dogs I felt like I had no reason to get up and go outside again but now, with John, I really do. I'm not sure what the future holds, but I'm looking forward to it. At some point I won't be responsible for Mum anymore so I'm looking forward to this new chapter, which looks active and positive.

By unexpectedly falling in love with running, I've unexpectedly fallen in love with John. I would never have met him otherwise, but putting on those trainers has literally changed my life for the better.' >>

She made a new group of friends

'Exercise has done wonders for my sex life'

Nicole Liddon, 44, from Essex, is a hairdresser and hair accessories entrepreneur

'Like many women, I've spent years battling my body – not feeling good enough, wishing I looked different, trying to change to feel more sexy – and it's affected everything; my self-esteem, my relationships and my sex life. But since finding a new appreciation for exercise, I feel strong and beautiful in an entirely new way – and it's completely transformed things for me, especially in the bedroom.

I had my three children (now 20, 17 and 15) when I was quite young, which meant that most of my 20s were taken up by that. I gained weight with each pregnancy and punished myself with gruelling, obsessive workouts afterwards, desperately trying to still be attractive for my partner, their dad. But eventually our relationship fell apart.

After that, I thought that if people wanted to have sex with me then it meant that I was beautiful and desirable, even though I didn't feel any of those things about myself. I'd have sex with lots of partners, thinking that made me sexually liberated, but would only do it when I was drunk. I didn't feel confident when I was sober and would certainly never have sex with the lights on.

If I'm honest, my 30s were a bit of a mess. I didn't know how to use my energy, so I'd end up getting drunk and having meaningless sex. And then I'd feel bad about it. My mental health hit rock bottom, but I started to look inwards to see how I could build myself back up.

I began by going to a local dance class. I'd always loved moving to music and the teacher was loud, unapologetic and encouraged us to touch our bodies. I felt a bit uncomfortable but the more I did it the more it sparked something in me. Why shouldn't I touch my body? My body was amazing – it had birthed three boys, it could dance around the room – there was something powerful about really connecting with that.

> 'I feel strong, empowered, a bit of a warrior'

At the same time, I found some online fitness classes (@bodybyciaraapp) that I'd seen on a friend's instagram. I started doing her workouts each morning just to encourage myself to get up and move, and became hooked. Within minutes of each session my heart rate is raised, I can feel my muscles stretching and the endorphins kick in; and when I finish, I feel a real sense of achievement.

These workouts, and the dance classes, have changed the way I think about exercise – and my body. I'm no longer doing it to look different or to change myself for someone. I'm doing it because I enjoy it, and it makes me appreciate my body and the strength and ability of my muscles in a different way. And some of the stuff in the fitness class is actually quite sexy too. The other morning, I was lying on my back doing 200 thrusts and I looked down at my body and thought, this is actually quite a turn-on. I felt strong, empowered and, basically, a bit of a warrior!

I've recently got back together with a guy that I was seeing years ago and feel completely differently about my body than when we were last together, which is evident in the sex we're having. Back then, I would have only been intimate with him if we'd been drinking and the lights were off. But now all of that has changed.

I feel good in my body and proud of what it can do, which means that I no longer need to self-medicate beforehand. Having sober sex with my partner means I'm more present in the moment, more able to tell him what I want and need, and it means that we're connecting on a whole different level. And it feels amazing.'

✢ @proudesss

Nicole has learned to love her body

Lisa and Eddie push each other to be better

'Working out together is as important as date night'

Lisa Nestor, 52, from east London, is a personal trainer and wellness coach

'I met Eddie when I was 21 and he was 27. I was modelling swimwear in a fashion show and he was the compère – and that was it. We fell in love and spent the next two decades doing *everything* together. Our life was fun and fast paced, full of travelling and socialising, with no real commitments to tie us down. But, naturally, when we had children a lot of that changed.

We had our first son when I was 39. Eddie and I had been training to climb Kilimanjaro when I found out I was pregnant, so suddenly that crazy adventure had to be put on hold. Our son was born, and having him was amazing, but as every parent knows, looking after a newborn is relentless. We'd spent years dropping everything and running off on holiday or going to fancy parties, and now we were both tired and exhausted. Our whole focus was our baby. When we did sit down to talk to each other, it was always just about baby stuff.

I was so tired, but Eddie recognised that I needed a bit of my old life back and suggested that we start training again for our hike, so I agreed, taking my baby in the buggy to the gym.

When our son was 18 months old, Eddie and I climbed Kilimanjaro together – and made it to the top. It was hugely challenging, both physically and mentally. We were exhausted, freezing and hungry but we were together again, just the two of us. And it was that act of doing something really physical together that really began to bring us back together.

> 'It's easy to forget the people you were'

We returned home, to our baby, with a new appreciation for the challenges of parenthood, knowing that we could work together as a team, while not forgetting who we were in the process.

We had our second son five years later, but having two meant there was even less time to be a couple. It's easy to forget the people you were and the connection you had before children – if you don't realise that it's happening, it can creep up and change things irrevocably. It's something that definitely could have happened to us.

Luckily, Eddie saw these signs and said we *had* to carve out time for just the two of us, so that's when regular date nights and weekly training sessions became our non-negotiables. We've always loved staying fit and working out but making time to do it together gives us space away from the children to be "Lisa and Eddie" again.

We'll do a mixture of HIIT and strength training, and now that I've qualified as a PT myself, I tailor programmes for both of us. In fact, as I expand my wellness business, I'm treating Eddie as a bit of a project!

During these sessions we laugh, we talk about the things we've been up to, we encourage each other to work out harder and we push each other to be better because we're both fiercely competitive. If he gets a personal best, I'll want one too – and that enthusiasm and encouragement for each other then spills over into all the other areas of our life together.'

+ Instagram @lisa.nestor

WORDS: SAMANTHA WOOD. MAIN PHOTO: GETTY, ALISON DELANEY, BYEMMAJANE.CO.UK

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YOUR BODY & HEALTH

GOTTA GIVE IT UP

If you've decided that 2023 is the year to lose bad habits, then we've got your back. Cutting back on booze, sugar, caffeine, or even your phone time, is tough, but it can be done! Just follow our expert guide over the page. This issue, we're also investigating the current crisis in dental health and we look at the truth behind 'old wives tales'. We prefer to think of these health hand-me-downs as female wisdom at its best – but do any of them work?

PHOTO: GETTY

Make this the year you STOP!

Thinking of giving up caffeine, sugar or booze? Our experts reveal how your body and mind respond

Got plans for a healthier, happier 2023? This might include ditching the 'thing' that is no longer benefiting you. But whether that's giving up smoking, drinking alcohol or eating meat, abstinence isn't easy – and even with the willpower to go 'cold turkey', you can sometimes feel worse before you feel better.

'The things we want to give up are often addictive and our bodies may have become dependent on them,' says health and wellbeing coach Claire Davis*. 'This means going through a period of "detox", which can cause unpleasant and uncomfortable side effects.' But it won't be forever, the benefits are often just around the corner. Here's what to expect when you're ready to quit.

SAYING GOODBYE TO SUGAR

YOU'LL FEEL GOOD IN... 2 WEEKS

'Sugar is highly inflammatory, so as well as causing weight gain and bloating, it can lead to illnesses such as diabetes and seriously affect our minds,' explains Claire. 'Cutting out – or cutting down – on refined sugar does wonders for our health and can improve sleep, boost energy levels and help us think clearer.'

WHAT TO EXPECT

'Most people will experience a drop in energy and can feel low, lethargic and depressed when quitting sugar,' says Claire. This is because it gives us 'fake energy', which our bodies rely on. 'You might find that you sleep badly and experience low-level headaches and skin breakouts, while your body detoxifies itself. These symptoms can last up to a few weeks but then cravings disappear and energy levels are restored.'

QUIT TIP!

Itching to reach for that one biscuit, which often turns into four? 'Count slowly to five and do something else first, such as stepping outside or making a cup of herbal tea – liquorice is great as it's slightly sweet,' says Claire. 'We call this a "pattern interrupt" and it can be helpful when you're first trying to step away from sugar.'

BINNING THE BOOZE

YOU'LL FEEL GOOD IN... 5 DAYS

'Alcohol affects every system in the body with more than 200 diseases linked to it, including liver and heart disease, and breast, mouth and throat cancer,' says Dr Sadie Boniface, head of research at the Institute of Alcohol Studies. But you might want to quit because of how you feel the morning after. 'Hangovers are never nice – they often get worse with age – plus there are strong links between alcohol and depression,' says Dr Boniface. 'Those who cut down or stop find that they become healthier, happier and more productive.'

WHAT TO EXPECT

For most people, cutting out alcohol shouldn't cause any bad side effects. 'If you don't drink wildly outside of the recommended guidelines (14 units a week) then stopping shouldn't give you negative symptoms,' says Dr Boniface. 'You might feel emotionally uncomfortable in social situations without a drink, but physically you're likely to notice positive changes like better sleep, a clearer head and more energy within a week.' Some studies show that the liver begins to improve 24 hours after stopping drinking and can potentially be healed within six weeks.

QUIT TIP!

Periods of temporary abstinence can put some distance between you and booze. 'Dry January or Sober Spring are a gentle way to ease in, giving you a legitimate "excuse" to say no,' says Dr Boniface. 'A month is a great amount of time to reset and people often find that they want to keep going, or choose a different drinking pattern afterwards.' >>

WHEN TO SEE YOUR GP

For those who are dependent on alcohol, there are likely to be more extreme withdrawal symptoms. Heavy drinkers should seek medical advice before stopping as going 'cold turkey' can be dangerous, says Dr Boniface.

STUBBING OUT SMOKING

YOU'LL FEEL GOOD IN... 72 HOURS

Smoking kills around 78,000 people in the UK each year, with many more getting smoking-related diseases. But after that final cigarette, the body begins to repair. 'The lungs, heart and circulation all start to heal the moment you quit,' says Stuart Gale, chief pharmacist at Oxford Online Pharmacy. 'Quit at age 60 and your life expectancy can increase by three years, quit at 30 and it's closer to 10.'

WHAT TO EXPECT

'When a regular smoker attempts to quit they experience withdrawal, which can cause irritability, restlessness, anxiety and hunger – but these should ease within days,' says Deborah Arnott from Action on Smoking and Health. 'After eight hours oxygen levels start recovering, after 72 hours all carbon monoxide is flushed out and within two weeks, breathing will be easier. Plus, the reductions in depression, anxiety and stress from quitting smoking are equivalent to that of taking antidepressants.'

QUIT TIP!

NRT (Nicotine Replacement Therapies) can double your chances of quitting for good. 'Most smokers believe smoking reduces stress, but it only provides short-term relief from cravings caused by addiction,' explains Deborah. 'Using NRT or electronic cigarettes can help get over that first hurdle.'

CUTTING CAFFEINE

YOU'LL FEEL GOOD IN... 3 WEEKS

'Caffeine is a stimulant but for some it can trigger feelings of anger, anxiety or depression,' explains nutrition coach Jenny Chu. Drinking less – or none – may help to regulate moods and improve sleep. 'This is because caffeine is an anti-nutrient and can prevent your body from absorbing essential vitamins,' says Jenny. 'As you reduce your intake, your body can absorb more iron, calcium and magnesium, which can help with sleep and energy levels.'

WHAT TO EXPECT

'You're likely to feel fatigue, low energy levels and maybe low mood and concentration,' explains Jenny. Caffeine consumption also causes blood vessels to narrow so when you stop, these open up again increasing blood flow to the brain, which can bring on headaches. 'Symptoms may appear within 12-24 hours and last a few days or a few weeks, varying from person to person and depending on the amount of caffeine your body has got used to.'

QUIT TIP!

Cut down before you quit to minimise the negative symptoms. 'Start by replacing one cup a day with decaf coffee or herbal tea and then slowly increase these over a week or two,' says Jenny.

> ‘Don’t write it off as a failure if you give in – try again with new resolve’

MISSING OUT MEAT

YOU’LL FEEL GOOD IN... 7 DAYS

Thinking of going meat-free? Meat might upset your stomach, be too expensive or you may have ethical or environmental reasons for quitting. ‘It’s hard to know how quickly giving up meat impacts on the body without daily blood tests,’ says Jenny. ‘However, we do know it is a source of saturated fat, and that too much in the diet can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. Studies show that people who cut back tend to eat fewer calories, less fat and have a lower risk of heart disease.’

WHAT TO EXPECT

Suddenly stopping eating meat causes a change in your gut microbiome that can lead to withdrawal symptoms like headaches, irritability and problems sleeping. ‘You might also have lower energy as a result of anaemia as meat is a protein source and an essential source of iron and vitamin B12,’ says Jenny. Replacing meat with protein alternatives – such as beans, lentils, wholegrains and leafy greens – and taking a B12 supplement is recommended to help.

QUIT TIP!

Start with meat-free Mondays. ‘If cutting back seems impossible, start with one meat-free day a week,’ says Jenny. ‘Also, look for meat alternatives of your favourite meals – such as a Mexican bean chilli instead of chilli con carne – so you won’t feel like you’re denying yourself.’

SWITCHING OFF YOUR SMARTPHONE

YOU’LL FEEL GOOD IN... 10 MINS

Scrolling social media, online shopping or checking the news can leave us feeling wiped out. ‘These things trigger responses on a physiological, psychological and emotional level,’ says digital wellbeing coach Katie Brockhurst. ‘Getting likes on social media or clicking to buy something creates the hormone dopamine – which can turn into cortisol, our “stress” hormone. Being constantly connected overloads our brains. Taking a break can improve sleep, attention spans and relationships, and lower anxiety.’**

WHAT TO EXPECT

Phone withdrawal can leave you feeling anxious and disconnected. ‘Expect to find yourself reaching for your phone or feeling frustrated,’ says Katie. Noticing these uncomfortable feelings shines a light on the habit – once you start to break it you’ll see positive changes quickly.

QUIT TIP!

Create smartphone-free spaces throughout your day. ‘Charge it overnight in another room so it’s not the last or first thing you reach for,’ says Katie. ‘Also, pop it on airplane mode and shut it out of sight in a drawer for an hour or two while you focus on something else, like work or reading. Notice how it feels to be without your device in these spaces you create.’

HOW TO QUIT

These tips will make giving something up feel easier...

+ START SLOWLY

When changing lifelong habits, allow yourself time to adapt to a new routine and swap in healthier alternatives to ease the process.

+ PLAY IT FORWARD

Eating a sugary treat or having several drinks might seem like an enjoyable thing that you’re missing out on, but think forward a few hours or to the next morning. Is it worth how you’ll feel then?

+ BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Remember that most things that we find hard to give up are addictive. It doesn’t mean you have no willpower, so don’t berate yourself.

+ ALLOW SLIP-UPS

If you abstain but then give in, don’t write it off as a failure. Think about the time that you did manage – that’s still progress. Try again with new resolve.

*MIDLIFE MENTOR AT 28 DEGREES NORTH. **SOCIALMEDIAFORANEWAGE.COM. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. WORDS: SAMANTHA WOOD. PHOTOS: GETTY

And breathe...

From the cold weather to open fires, here's what may be triggering your asthma symptoms and how to stop a flare-up in its tracks

Every 10 seconds in the UK someone will have a potentially life-threatening asthma attack*. And, with winter well and truly upon us, those with asthma could experience a worsening of their symptoms. 'This is because there are lots of triggers this time of year, such as cold weather, more flu and cold viruses circulating, plus damp and mould,' says GP Dr Andy Whittamore, clinical lead at Asthma UK. Want to know how you can protect yourself and your loved ones this chilly season? Our experts have the answers.

4.3 million

is how many adults in the UK have asthma, while 1.1 million children have the condition.

Did you know?

There has been a 43% increase in asthma deaths in people aged 55-64 since 2016, according to the Office of National Statistics.

WHAT IS ASTHMA?

Asthma is a long-term lung condition that affects your bronchial airways – the tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. In people with asthma, these airways are sensitive and inflamed. When they come into contact with something that irritates them further – known as 'asthma triggers' – they react. The muscles around the walls of the airways tighten so the airways become narrower, the lining becomes inflamed and starts to swell and, in some people, a build-up of sticky mucus (phlegm) occurs which narrows the airways further.

It is these reactions that make it difficult for people with asthma to breathe and lead to the common asthma symptoms of tightness in the chest, as well as episodes of wheezing and coughing. In serious cases, this can lead to an asthma attack.

WINTER TRIGGERS

There are several reasons why asthma symptoms are often worse at this time of year. Illnesses that impact the respiratory system – such as common colds, the flu, Covid-19, as well as bacterial chest infections, are in higher circulation, which can cause a flare-up – with 75% of asthma sufferers saying their symptoms get worse when they have a cold or the flu.

'The change in temperature is also a factor. Cold air and an increase in central heating are drying to the environment which can exacerbate asthma by increasing mucus production in the lungs,' says Dr Unnati Desai, GP national lead at Nuffield Health. 'Where possible, we recommend keeping warm but ensuring environments are humid, not damp.'

Indoor air pollutants during the colder months can also trigger flare-ups, such as open fires, mould and dust mites. Opening windows (for a brief amount of time!) on opposite sides of the home to create cross ventilation, using extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom, and avoiding smoking indoors, can help.

YOUR BREATHE-BETTER TOOLKIT

These expert tips will help you look after your asthma during the colder months and beyond…

USE YOUR PREVENTER INHALER

'One of the best ways to keep your airways healthy is to use your preventer inhaler as prescribed daily and all year round. This stops inflammation building up, meaning they will be less sensitive and less likely to react to triggers,' says Dr Whittamore. 'This includes any of your winter triggers, like cold air. It is also important to keep your reliever inhaler (usually blue) with you at all times as this quickly deals with asthma symptoms if you do get them.'

CONSIDER YOUR ENVIRONMENT

'Try to avoid crowded places – more people means more potential risk of passing on infections,' says Dr Desai. If you know that someone is unwell – for example in your household or at work – keep your distance from them. Similarly, if friends or family are smokers, avoid heading outside with them or remove yourself from the room in which they're smoking.

'At home, make sure you're regularly dusting, vacuuming and changing your bedding. If you want to keep an area humidified but not damp, a great tip is to put a bowl of water over radiators that are on, although do not try this on electric radiators!' says Dr Desai.

Cold air is, of course, harder to avoid, but Dr Whittamore suggests wearing a scarf over your mouth (as long as it feels comfortable to do so) to warm up the air as you breathe to help prevent asthma attacks.

GET YOUR VACCINES

While being vaccinated may not stop you from getting the infection, the partial immunity will minimise the chances of a severe infection. If you have asthma, you're entitled to a free flu jab, which you can book at your GP surgery or local pharmacy.

EXERCISE

Like every part of the body, we need to exercise our lungs. 'This can make them work more efficiently and help us to use our lungs better,' says Dr Whittamore. But you don't necessarily need to go for a run to get results, even singing and playing a musical instrument can help control your breathing better.

DEVELOP AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN

This helps you stay on top of your asthma treatments and triggers and tells you what to do if your symptoms get worse. You can download a plan from asthma.org.uk

When to seek help

If you find you are having to use your reliever inhaler three or more times a week or are having symptoms, book in to see your GP or asthma nurse immediately for a review.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. *ASTHMA UK. PHOTO: GETTY.

Listen UP!

Knowing the signs of hearing loss can prevent further damage in the future

Find you have to strain harder than normal to hear nowadays? You're not alone – 42% of people over 50 years old have some sort of hearing loss, says Franki Oliver from the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (rnid.org.uk). And when there's extra background noise to contend with, the signs can become more apparent.

'Most people's hearing declines with age simply because of wear and tear,' says Franki. 'But everyone is different, so you might not notice your hearing deteriorating at first, but it's important to look out for the signs so you can take action to protect it, which in turn can safeguard your mental health and quality of life.'

Despite it happening to most of us at some point, there's still a stigma attached to hearing loss and the embarrassment it can cause can lead people to avoid social situations and even quit their jobs. In fact, a study by the Danish Institute for Social Research has shown that one in five give up their jobs when hearing and understanding conversations with work colleagues becomes tricky, rather than seek help for the problem.

So, if you're worried about your hearing, listen up, because help is at hand…

LET'S START WITH THE SCIENCE

Our ability to hear depends on a series of steps inside the ear that change sound waves in the air into electrical signals. These signals then get carried to the brain where we interpret them as sound. The key players in this process are the hair cells inside the cochlea, which detect sound. But unlike other cells in our body that can rejuvenate, once these hair cells get damaged or die, there's no replacing them.

'We're born with a certain number of hair cells and over time they die off which reduces our ability to hear,' says Franki. 'There are multiple reasons why they die or become damaged, such as being exposed to frequent, loud noise or ageing. Once those cells diminish there's no way to replace them, so protecting them can be extremely beneficial to you.'

RECOGNISING THE SIGNS

There's no hard and fast rule with hearing loss, but Franki says that in the early stages our ability to hear high- pitched noises is often the first to be affected. But it can also be extremely gradual, often taking years – or decades – to decline.

'It might start with you finding it more difficult to hear friends chat when you're in a busy restaurant, having to turn down music to follow a conversation or finding phone calls are more challenging,' she says. 'But often the signs can be so subtle, others might notice before you do.'

Do your kids complain that you've got the TV up too loud? Perhaps your partner is getting annoyed at being asked to repeat themselves? These could be signs that it's time for a test.

DON'T DO IT!

They say never put anything in your ear that is smaller than your elbow and experts agree that this is excellent advice. 'Not even a cotton tipped earbud should be inserted into the ear canal,' says Franki. They can cause damage and push earwax deeper. A small amount of wax actually protects our ears, but for buildups; a small drop of olive oil should keep it soft.

TIME TO TAKE ACTION

If you've noticed some of these signs – or even if you haven't and you're around 50 – it might be worth having a hearing test. Many places on the highstreet (like Boots, Specsavers and Hidden Hearing clinics) offer them, so you don't even have to see your GP.

'If you're reluctant to take a test because you don't know if you really need one, there are initial ones you can do online at home,' suggests Franki, who says that the one you can find at rnid.org.uk/check is free and takes just three minutes. 'It won't give you an extensive reading, but will be enough to show whether you'd benefit from a more substantial test.'

Getting help with your hearing means you're less likely to lose confidence doing the things you love – like going out and working, meaning you'll live a fuller life for longer. >>

PROTECT YOUR HEARING

While you can't reverse the inevitable effects of ageing, there are things you can do to protect your hearing:

1 MAINTAIN A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Your hearing is linked to your brain, so keeping fit, healthy and active is always beneficial for keeping all those cogs turning. Eat a balanced diet, maintain a healthy weight and take regular exercise.

2 AVOID NOISY ENVIRONMENTS

Prolonged exposure to noise can damage your ear's important hair cells, so be mindful of your environment. For example, the noise in a nightclub can start to be damaging after 15 minutes.

3 TURN VOLUME DOWN

Don't listen to music through headphones for long periods and, if you do, take breaks. Most headphones have volume monitoring, which you should stick to, and don't turn them up to drown out exterior noise.

4 CHECK YOUR MEDS

Occasionally, medication might affect your hearing, but this is very rare. Some chemotherapy drugs, strong IV antibiotics and a high dose of aspirin might have an effect, but any concerns should be mentioned to a doctor.

5 GUARD AGAINST GRINDING

Grinding your teeth at night creates pressure on the muscles between the ear and jaw and can lead to temporary hearing loss. If you are a grinder, visit your dentist who might suggest a protective 'grinding guard' to wear at night.

RINGING OR BUZZING IN YOUR EARS?

It could be tinnitus. It can be caused by damage to the hair cells (brought on by exposure to loud noise) and/or a sign of hearing loss. See your GP if affecting your sleep or bothering you on a daily basis.

MODERN-DAY HEARING AIDS

If you're worried that potential hearing loss might lead to an unsightly, clunky, whistling hearing aid – don't be! Hearing aid technology is miles away from where it used to be. Think small and discrete, rechargeable and high-tech – with some even hooking up to your smartphone. There are even models made to look like cool earphones.

'The range of both NHS grade and private hearing aids is phenomenal,' says Franki. 'Some even track your brain health and can adjust hearing levels depending on whether you're on a quiet country walk or in a busy pub. There's something to suit everyone.' Private options range from about £500 to £5,000.

IS IT A SIGN OF DEMENTIA?

Studies have found an increased risk of disability and dementia in those with hearing loss. According to the Alzheimer's Society, there's a growing body of research which suggests that hearing loss is a risk factor for dementia – although exactly why is not yet known. However, these associations weren't found in research participants who were using hearing aids.

'We don't know yet whether hearing aids somehow bring the risk of dementia back down, but it does suggest that this might be the case,' says Clare Walton, research manager at Alzheimer's Society. One explanation might be that hearing loss challenges may cause people to step away from the things that keep them mentally stimulated, which may then raise the risk of isolation, depression and ultimately cognitive decline.

WORDS: SAMANTHA WOOD. PHOTOS: GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP.

Our body's little HELPERS

Pro, pre or post biotic? For something so tiny, they can be very confusing. Here's the how, what and why of these clever organisms

You've probably heard of probiotics for gut health – often described as 'friendly' bacteria. But did you know there are biotics for your skin, mouth and vagina? Organisms that live on and in the human body – fungi, bacteria, viruses – and support our microbiome aren't just good for the gut, but can boost everything from oral health to our wellbeing.

GUT

Probiotics are important for a number of processes within the body. 'They support and even manufacture some neurotransmitters (like serotonin) and vitamins,' says registered nutritional therapist Sandra Greenbank. 'They also help prevent potential disease-causing bacteria, yeasts and viral infections.' **TRY Symprove, £79 for a four-week pack, symprove.com**

SKIN

Introducing probiotics to skincare regime helps shield against bacteria, inflammation and premature ageing. It also improves hydration, and reduces sensitivity from eczema and psoriasis. Be warned, though, as poor gut health directly influences skin health. 'Your body rids toxins through the skin, which can cause inflammation,' says Louise Mason, nutritional therapist at Optibac Probiotics. **TRY Advanced Nutrition Programme Skin Clear Biome, £58 for 60 capsules, advancednutritionprogramme.com**

VAGINA

'Probiotics help increase the healthy Lactobacillus bacteria in the vagina,' says Sandra. 'Lactobacilli help normalise the pH, so that harmful bacteria or yeasts can't take hold.'

If you experience recurrent thrush, taking a probiotic could reduce the risk of relapse. **TRY Optibac Probiotics For Women, £18.99 for 30 capsules (take orally), optibacprobiotics.com**

MIND

Probiotics that benefit the brain are known as psychobiotics. 'They work by regulating neurotransmitters and maintaining vagus nerve health,' says Sophie Medlin, consultant dietitian and founder of City Dietitians. This oversees bodily functions such as mood control and digestion. **TRY Bio-Kult Mind Advanced Multi-Action Formulation, £20.65 for 60 capsules, amazon.co.uk**

MOUTH

Dental probiotics focus on the growth of good bacteria, while hindering the growth of bad bacteria, which can cause gum disease and tooth decay. Oral probiotics can also help fight oral thrush and bacteria on dentures. **TRY Luvbiotics Advanced Dental Hygiene Cherry Lozenges, £8.95 for 30 lozenges, hollandandbarrett.com**

PRE, PRO OR POST
What's the difference?

– PROBIOTICS
Living strains of bacteria that add to good bacteria in your digestive tract.

– PREBIOTICS
Specialised plant fibre that feeds the good bacteria.

– POSTBIOTICS
Created by probiotic bacteria when they have 'eaten' fibre or prebiotics.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. SPEAK TO YOUR GP OR MEDICAL EXPERT BEFORE TAKING NEW SUPPLEMENTS. WORDS: ROSE GOODMAN. PHOTOS: GETTY

Can't find an NHS DENTIST?

There's no denying that we're on the brink of a dental disaster, but here's what you can do about it

Struggling to find affordable oral healthcare? You're not alone. We're in the midst of a dental crisis, with millions of us unable to access routine dental care. In fact, according to one survey, 91% of NHS dentists in England are closed to new patients wanting a check-up*, and 80% of surgeries aren't even taking on children.

'The figures are alarming,' says Rachel Power, chief executive of the Patients Association. 'What are people supposed to do if they move to an area where there are no dentists taking on NHS patients?' While the situation feels dire, there are ways to help improve the health of your teeth at home, and to ensure you get the care that you and your family need. Here's what you need to know.

> 'Dentists are catching up after Covid, but some patients have seen their oral health deteriorate further'

HOW DID IT COME TO THIS?

The Covid-19 crisis put extra strain on an already overstretched service. A long-term shortage of NHS dentists was made worse by the pandemic, so a growing backlog of patients needing care went unseen. Now dentists are catching up, but some patients have seen their oral health deteriorate further while waiting for treatment, meaning they need more work. If you can register as an NHS patient, turn up for your appointments otherwise you may be struck off.

GET REGISTERED

If you've contacted several surgeries but can't find one that's taking new patients, call:

✢ England: NHS England Customer Contact Centre on 0300 311 2233.

✢ Scotland: NHS Inform helpline on 0800 22 44 88.

✢ Wales: The Board of Community Health Councils on 02920 235558.

✢ Northern Ireland: Patient and Client Council on 0800 917 0222.

Your local Healthwatch also works towards improving standards of care and listens to feedback. They can offer advice about dental care in your area and raise any concerns that you have. Call them on 03000 68 3000, or visit healthwatch.co.uk

Unlike GP surgeries, there's no catchment area, so you can register with a dental practice near your work instead of home, or anywhere that's convenient.

URGENT CARE

Hospitals will deal with serious dental emergencies, such as injuries to your teeth, mouth or face, severe pain and heavy bleeding. Unsure whether your situation qualifies? Call NHS 111. Dentists who aren't taking on NHS patients or offering routine appointments may have emergency appointments.

HOW MUCH?

Unlike many NHS services, dentistry is not completely free. Most of us have to pay for check-ups and treatment. NHS charges start at £23.80 for examinations, diagnosis and advice. Fillings and extractions cost £65.20, while more complex procedures, including crowns, dentures and bridges, are £282.80.

Going private is obviously more expensive, but dental insurance plans are an option if you want to spread the cost of future dental care. For example, simplyhealth.co.uk has plans ranging from £11 to £32 per month, covering £500 for emergencies and £5,000 for dental accidents.

However, with some private dental insurance plans, terms and conditions apply, so check any policy carefully first.

TOOTH-FRIENDLY TIPS

Are you inadvertently harming your teeth? Do these four things to maintain your smile.

✢ AVOID BRUSHING TOO HARD
To protect your enamel, stick to small, circular movements, several times on the inside, outside and biting surfaces of each tooth. An electric toothbrush with an alert will stop you pressing too hard.

✢ DON'T BRUSH TOO SOON AFTER EATING
Leave at least 30 minutes, especially after eating something sugary, to protect the enamel. 'Instead, rinse with mouthwash after meals to bring the pH balance down,' says Dr Hughes.

✢ FORGET FIZZY DRINKS
We know that sugary drinks are bad for our teeth, but diet drinks can be too. 'Fizzy drinks are all carbonated, which causes erosion,' explains Dr Hughes. 'So stick with fizz-free beverages.'

✢ SPIT, DON'T RINSE
Don't rinse your mouth with water straight after brushing. Rinsing washes the fluoride in toothpaste off your teeth before it's had a chance to complete its job.

DID YOU KNOW?

'Chewing cheese helps reduce acidity and rebalance the pH balance in your mouth,' says dentist Dr Robbie Hughes**. 'This preserves and rebuilds enamel, while also playing an important role in washing the bacteria and plaque off teeth.'

THE BASICS

Taking care of your teeth can lower the risk of expensive treatment. 'Dentistry isn't something to put off until a problem arises,' warns Bupa dentist Susie Lloyd. 'Your teeth and gums need daily care.' Make sure you…

✢ Brush your teeth for two minutes, twice a day.

✢ Use a medium-to-soft bristle brush and a pea-sized blob of fluoride toothpaste.

✢ Clean between your teeth with dental floss, a water flosser or interdental brush. 'But these measures are not enough on their own,' says Susie. 'You also need regular check-ups with a dentist and, ideally, a hygienist too.'

CREDITS: *SURVEY BY THE BRITISH DENTAL ASSOCIATION AND THE BBC. **DENTALEXCELLENCEUK.COM. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. WORDS: TANYA PEAREY. PHOTO: GETTY.

Can a HEART *really be* BROKEN?

Romantic relationships might have more of an impact on your physical health than you realise

Have you experienced turmoil at some point over the years? You might remember feeling strong physical sensations along with deep emotions. Maybe you had a pit in your stomach or a deep ache in your chest after a break-up. While this is normal, in some cases a sudden shock or getting terrible news can also lead to a serious change in the way your heart functions. Medically called takotsubo cardiomyopathy, 'broken heart syndrome' (BHS) is experienced by about 3,000 people in the UK each year, and nine out of 10 of those affected are women. Here, our experts get to the heart of this condition.

THE PAIN IS REAL

Symptoms of BHS mimic those of a heart attack. 'It usually occurs in people who have experienced physically and/or emotionally stressful events, such as a bereavement,' says Ruth Goss, senior cardiac nurse at the British Heart Foundation. 'However, in around 30% of cases there is no identifiable trigger.' Research is still ongoing, but scientists believe that this stress results in a surge of adrenaline to the heart.

'This causes the left ventricle (the bottom left chamber of the heart, which is responsible for pumping blood out of the heart and around the body) to balloon and weaken suddenly,' says Ruth. 'It means that the heart can't pump blood around the body properly – and, in some cases, these changes can lead to other heart problems, like heart failure, for example.'

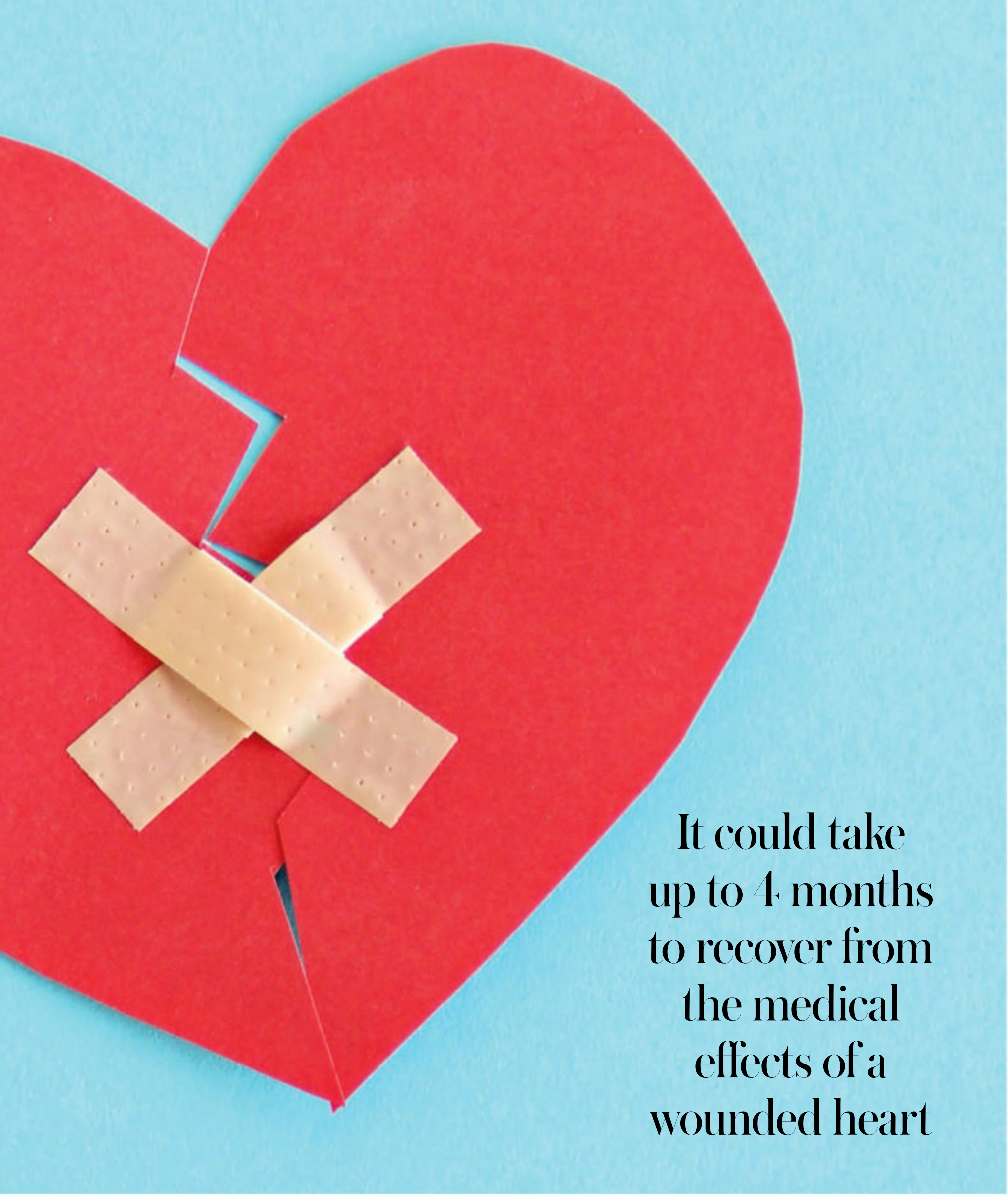
WHERE TO GET HELP

Always seek immediate medical help if you experience chest pain and shortness of breath for anything from a few minutes to hours, days or weeks after severe emotional or physical stress.

BHS V HEART ATTACK

The main difference between the two is that a heart attack is caused by a blockage in one of the coronary arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle. Patients with takotsubo syndrome don't have this blockage.

'It's only when doctors do further tests to examine the coronary arteries that they will see that there are no blockages, as there would be after a heart attack,' says Ruth. 'Instead, an echocardiogram (an



It could take up to 4 months to recover from the medical effects of a wounded heart

ultrasound of the heart) will show that the heart muscle is not working properly and the left ventricle is larger than normal.'

WHO IS AFFECTED AND HOW?

While we may think our emotions were most volatile in our teenage years, it's actually middle-aged and older women who are diagnosed with BHS up to 10 times more often than younger women or men of any age.* It's believed this is due to the female hormone oestrogen helping to protect the heart from the harmful effects of adrenaline, so women, in particular, become vulnerable to the effects of sudden stress as they age and their oestrogen levels drop.

BHS can cause so much pain, some sufferers will end up in hospital, often with a suspected heart attack. Because of the life-threatening electrical instability of the heart during the early stages of attack, many are admitted to a specialist coronary care unit for at least two days.

'There is no consensus on longer-term measures,' says consultant cardiologist Dr Dana Dawson of the University of Aberdeen. 'There haven't been any clinical trials yet to explore medicines that may help the heart recover better or prevent recurrence, although we're learning all the time.'

Luckily, you can expect to recover from the medical effects of a wounded heart, although research reveals it may take up to four months**. This is because the strenuous movements of the heart are still impaired for months after an attack, and scarring can occur, reducing elasticity and preventing the heart from contracting properly. This partly explains the small risk of death, even years later.

NATURAL STRESS BUSTERS

Adopting these daily habits can help take care of your heart, and reduce your risk of Broken Heart Syndrome (BHS).

CONNECTION

Oxytocin is a calming, feel-good hormone that is released when we feel love, comfort and trust. Do you have a fluffy friend at home? Stroking your companion animal can also release this hormone***, so spend quality time with a cat or dog to melt away tension.

MINDFUL BREATHING

- Place one hand on your upper chest and one on your stomach, just below your belly.
- Slowly breathe out as you count to 11.
- Pause and then breathe in to the count of seven.
- Repeat twice.

Try to make sure that the hand placed on your stomach is the only part that moves. When stressed, we take shallow breaths using the top of our chests. Learn to breathe more deeply to help calm your mind and body quickly.

MOVEMENT

Exercise burns up adrenaline and other stress hormones, while relaxing muscles and improving sleep. 'In general, any gentle or moderate exercise can be helpful,' says nutritionist Cassandra Barns.

'Movement stimulates the gut, relieving problems such as bloating and constipation, and doing something you enjoy will help lower your stress levels,' she adds.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SPEAK TO YOUR GP. **JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION.* **RESEARCH FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN, FUNDED BY THE BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION AND LED BY DR DAWSON. ****FRONTIERS IN PSYCHOLOGY.* PHOTO: GETTY

Wise women's tales that REALLY WORK

Our experts reveal the traditional cures that are worth trying

Whether you're struggling to sleep or want to soothe sore joints, there are plenty of rumoured remedies – passed down from generations of women (we refuse to call them old wives) – that may help relieve symptoms and improve your quality of life. But which are true health cures and what's just a myth? We get the lowdown from our experts.

WARM MILK... TO HELP YOU SLEEP

TRUE

There's truth behind this classic insomnia cure. 'Warm milk mixed with 1tsp organic raw cacao (of at least 85%), ¼tsp of nutmeg and 1tsp of honey can aid restful sleep,' says nutritional therapist Nat Hawes. 'Studies show that the calcium in the milk helps the brain to produce sleep-triggering melatonin.'

SOAP IN THE BED... FOR LEG CRAMPS

MYTH

'I've never heard this before,' says GP Dr Sarah Brewer. 'Cramps are linked with a build-up of lactic acid and other waste products of muscle metabolism. Stay hydrated and ensure good intakes of magnesium and calcium.' Try **Vitabiotics Osteocare Original, £5.35 for 30 tablets, vitabiotics.com.**

HONEY... TO HEAL SKIN WOUNDS

TRUE

'This is true, but don't just use the honey in your cupboard,' says Dr Brewer. 'You need a sterile, medicinal honey designed for wound healing.' Try **Comvita Medihoney Antibacterial Wound Gel (£9.99, comvita.co.uk),** a topical gel.

CHICKEN SOUP... TO CURE A COLD

TRUE

Got the sniffles? 'Homemade chicken soup can boost the immune system and help fight off a viral infection quickly,' says Nat. 'Chicken soup also helps the body to stay hydrated, which can speed up the healing process.' Treat yourself to a steaming bowl every day until symptoms ease.

HAIR OF THE DOG... FOR A HANGOVER

MYTH

Don't be tempted. 'Any relief is short-lived as the body then has to process the additional alcohol,' says chief pharmacist Stuart Gale (oxfordonlinepharmacy.co.uk). Rehydrating with water is a much better idea to help beat a hangover.

DOCK LEAVES... *FOR NETTLE STINGS*

TRUE

'Works for me every time!' says Dr Brewer. 'The sap in a dock leaf contains a chemical that reduces the effect of serotonin in the nettle venom, reducing inflammation and pain.' Simply rub over your sore spot.

GINGER... *FOR NAUSEA*

TRUE

Here's a remedy that's tried and tested to help quell queasiness. 'Ginger is a carminative – a herb that helps to settle the stomach, in turn easing sickness, spasms and wind,' says medical herbalist Hannah Charman. Choose a ginger infusion drink or tea rather than chewing on a lump of raw ginger. Try **Twinings Spiced Ginger tea bags, £2.25 for 20, Tesco.**

MUSTARD... *ON SORE JOINTS*

MYTH

'Goodness, how messy!' says Dr Brewer. 'Turmeric or devil's claw are effective herbal medicines for back and joint pain.' Try **A.Vogel Atrosan Devil's Claw Tablets, £11.50 for 30 tablets, avogel.co.uk,** or **Turmeric Active, £24.99 for 60 capsules, pukkaherbs.com.**

PEPPERMINT FOR... *BLOATING*

TRUE

Grow it fresh on your windowsill and add to boiling water. 'Peppermint tea is traditionally consumed after meals to help improve digestion, and it may also be helpful if you have IBS symptoms,' says nutrition therapist Ian Marber. To get the tummy benefits, you could also try **Teapigs Peppermint tea, £4.60 for 15 bags, teapigs.co.uk.**

LAVENDER FOR... *ANXIETY*

TRUE

Inhaling fresh lavender has been linked to lower blood pressure, heart rate and skin temperature, all great for a good night's kip. Studies have also shown that taking pharmaceutical-quality lavender oil can improve anxiety symptoms in women going through the menopause, without the side-effects of addictive benzodiazepines. As many as 98% of menopausal women feel on edge due to hormone fluctuations, according to Anxiety UK. Try **Kalms Lavender One-A-Day Capsule, £6.85 for 14 capsules, Boots.**

COPPER COIN... *TO TREAT WARTS*

MYTH

Copper has been thought to work against warts, but is there any truth behind this? 'Copper has a powerful antiviral action and, in some clinical environments, it's used to coat door handles to reduce cross-infection,' says Dr Brewer. 'But there's no evidence that taping a copper penny to a wart will cure it. You could, in fact, infect the coin with the wart virus, transferring it to someone who then later picks the coin up.'

PHOTO:: GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP

Your HEALTH

THIS MONTH

- Painful sex
- Migraine medication
- Cannabis addiction

Got a medical problem or need health advice? Ask GP Dr Philippa Kaye

Q *My adult son started smoking cannabis over lockdown. He lives with us, and my husband began to have a joint with him in the garden now and then. While my son seems to manage with the occasional joint, my husband now smokes cannabis daily. He says it isn't addictive, and it's simply that he enjoys it and that he used to smoke when he was younger. Is cannabis addictive?*

A Firstly, it's important to say that cannabis is illegal in the UK. It can cause dependence – in fact, it was found that a record number of people over the age of 55 years are seeking treatment for cannabis misuse or addiction, which is an increase of 777% over the past 15 years.

The cannabis or weed that your husband will have smoked when he was younger is likely to have been weaker than the stronger and harder 'skunk' that is more commonly available now, and which is associated with more mental health problems.

Dependence does occur, and people who use marijuana frequently report issues with mood and sleep, an impact on their appetite and irritability for the first couple of weeks after stopping. Addiction also occurs when the person involved cannot stop using cannabis, even if it's having a negative impact on other aspects of their lives.

If your husband decides he would like to get help with regards to stopping smoking cannabis, your GP will be able to advise him on local substance misuse clinics.

FACT OR FICTION?

A LOW-SALT DIET CAN HELP YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

Fact! It's well known that a diet high in salt (sodium) can cause high blood pressure, which increases your risk of a heart attack or stroke in the future. The good news is that most supermarkets sell low-salt alternatives, containing less sodium and more potassium, that taste like, well, salt!

A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* has shown low salt can help decrease the risk of stroke in patients who have high blood pressure. Ideally, you would still use less of even a low-salt alternative, and replace it with herbs and spices. The food industry would also need to get on board and use this in processed foods, but it may help! If you have been advised to avoid potassium, then discuss options with your GP before switching to a low-salt alternative.

Q *I've experienced migraines for years, and I've heard about a new medication you only have to take once a month. What is it?*

A Some people have only a very occasional migraine, but others can really suffer with regular migraines at least once a week, which can impact on their quality of life. There are lots of different prophylactic treatments available, which aim to stop migraines beginning, but it does depend on the impact your migraines are having on you. There are lots of options for migraine prophylaxis, including beta blockers, such as propranolol, and medications, such as amitriptyline and anti-seizure medications.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has recently approved a monthly migraine jab for people who experience migraines at least four days a month. Called fremanezumab, the monthly injection was previously approved for those who had at least 15 migraines per month. Trials have shown that it can halve the number of attacks. If you suffer with regular migraines, see your GP, who will let you know if it's suitable for you.

My partner and I used to have a great sex life, but things have changed since I had surgery to treat an abscess in the vagina. My sex drive and his are still there, but sex has become really painful. It feels like he can't get inside me, but I can still have an orgasm other ways. We use plenty of lubrication – what could be going on?

There are various possibilities so it's important to check with your GP that you've healed as expected. One cause could be vaginismus. This is a condition where there are involuntary spasms of the muscles of the vagina, meaning that sex is painful, or that penetration becomes impossible, not just with a penis but with a sex toy or even a tampon.

The pain is often felt at the opening of the vagina, and can feel like burning in nature. The causes aren't always known but it can occur after a trauma, which would include surgery. Spasms are involuntary, but there are treatments available. These include psychosexual counselling and relaxation techniques to help relax the muscles of the pelvic floor and the vagina.

Vaginal dilators can also be worth trying. With time, you will gradually increase through the sizes of dilator, in combination with breathing and relaxation techniques, until penetration is less painful.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. PHOTO: GETTY

DOCTOR'S ORDERS

IS YOUR SORE, SCRATCH THROAT LARYNGITIS?

This condition is an inflammation of the larynx, also known as the voice box, which contains your vocal cords. If this is inflamed and swollen, the sound produced by the air passing over the vocal cords is distorted and causes a hoarse or croaky voice. You could lose your voice, or suffer from a persistent cough, sore throat or need to clear your throat constantly.

Laryngitis can be due to an infection, such as a virus causing a cold, or due to overuse in people who talk, shout or sing a lot. It can also be caused by acid rising up from the stomach in gastroesophageal reflux, allergies or working in an environment with irritating fumes, or even from clearing your throat constantly. So depending on the cause, it may not be contagious.

If it's due to an infection then it tends to come on over a few days and improves on its own within a couple of weeks. There's no need to visit the GP to ask for antibiotics, as most infections that cause laryngitis are viral, meaning antibiotics don't work! Try to rest your voice, which means speaking as little as possible and not shouting or even whispering. Try to keep hydrated, and use honey or over-the-counter remedies and painkillers. Stopping smoking can also be useful.

If you don't improve, or if you feel more unwell, or have a sore throat or hoarse voice for more than three weeks, see your GP. Seek more urgent help if you have difficulties breathing or if you can't swallow your saliva. Depending on your symptoms, your GP may refer you to an ENT specialist.

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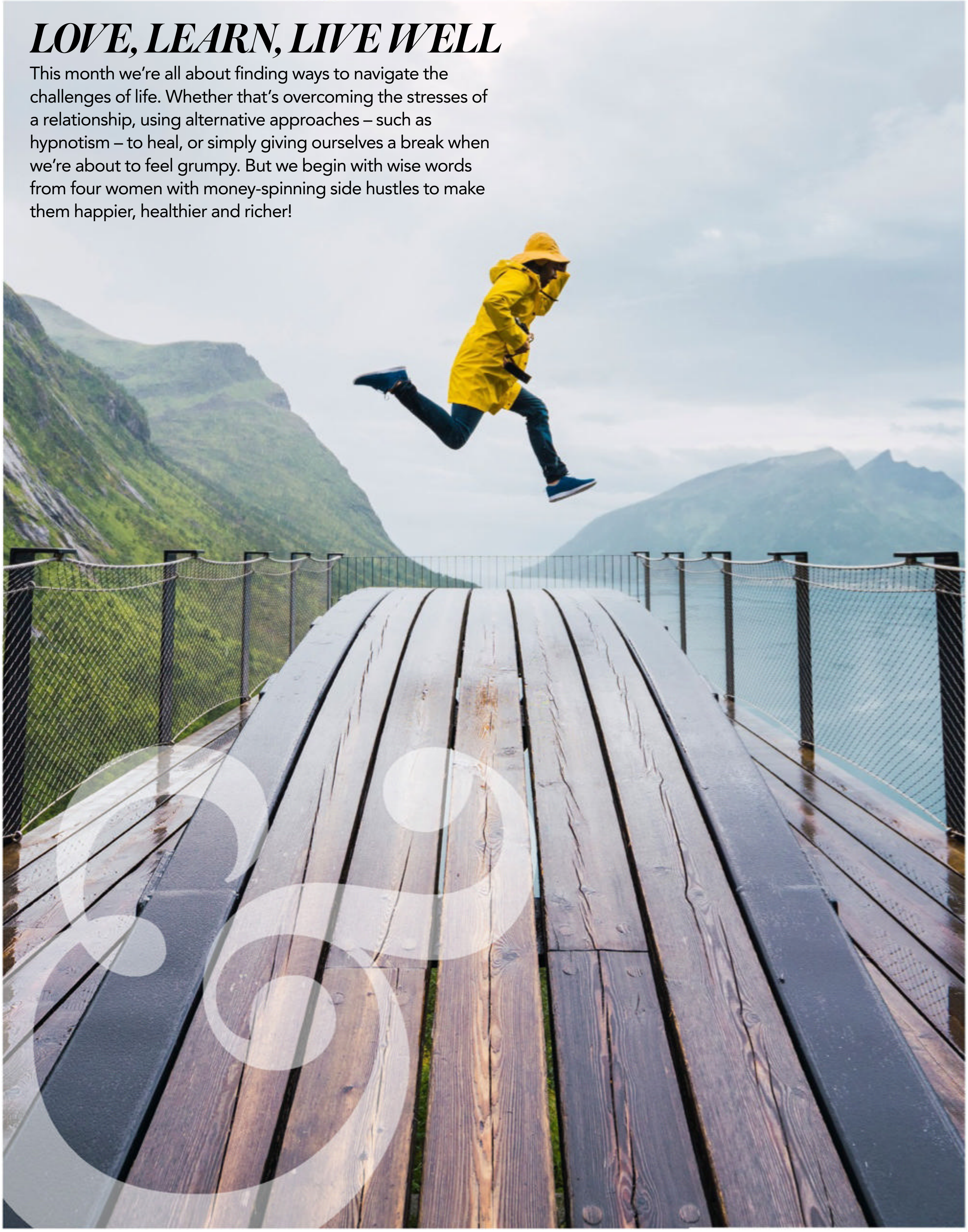
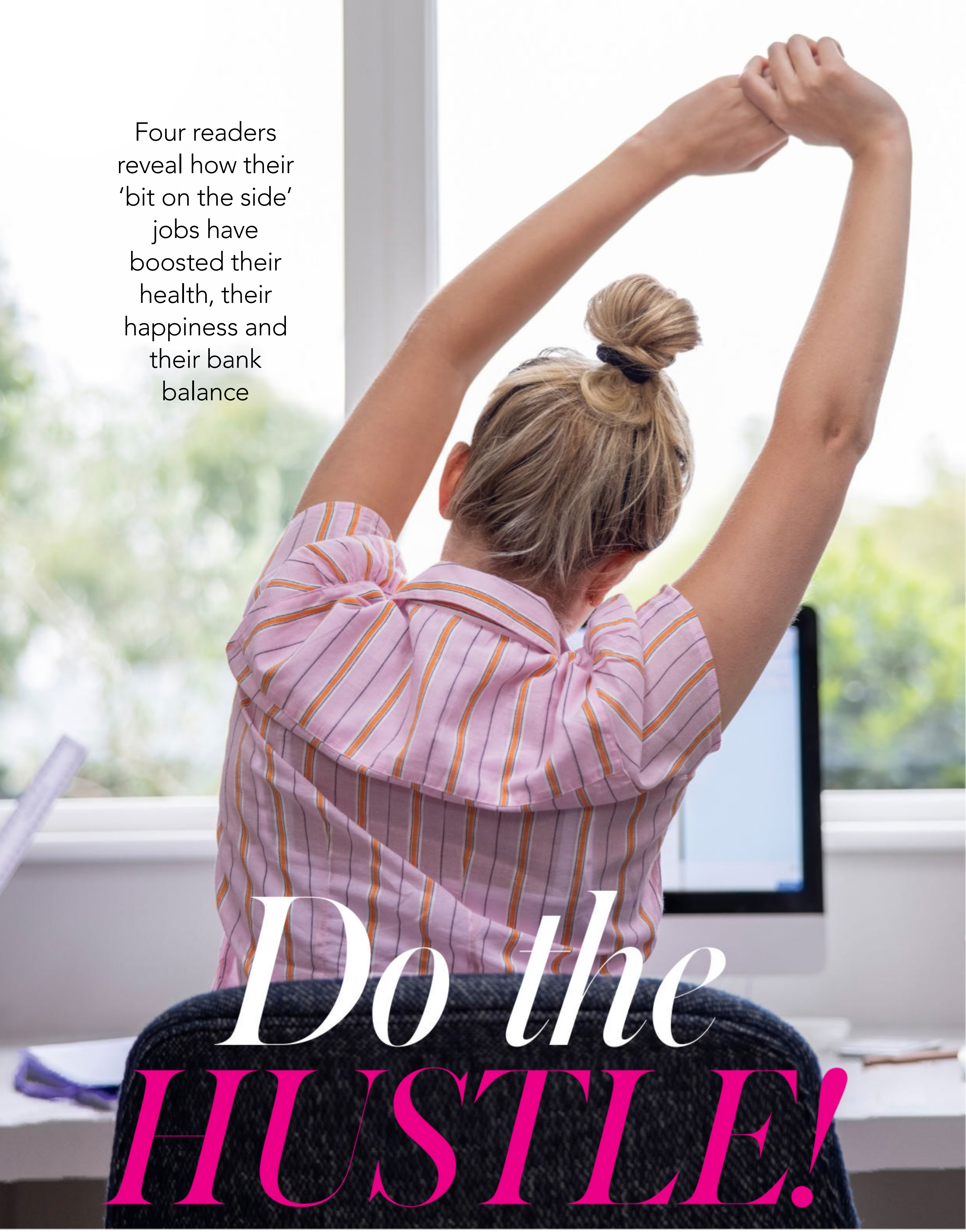
SELF & WELLBEING



LOVE, LEARN, LIVE WELL

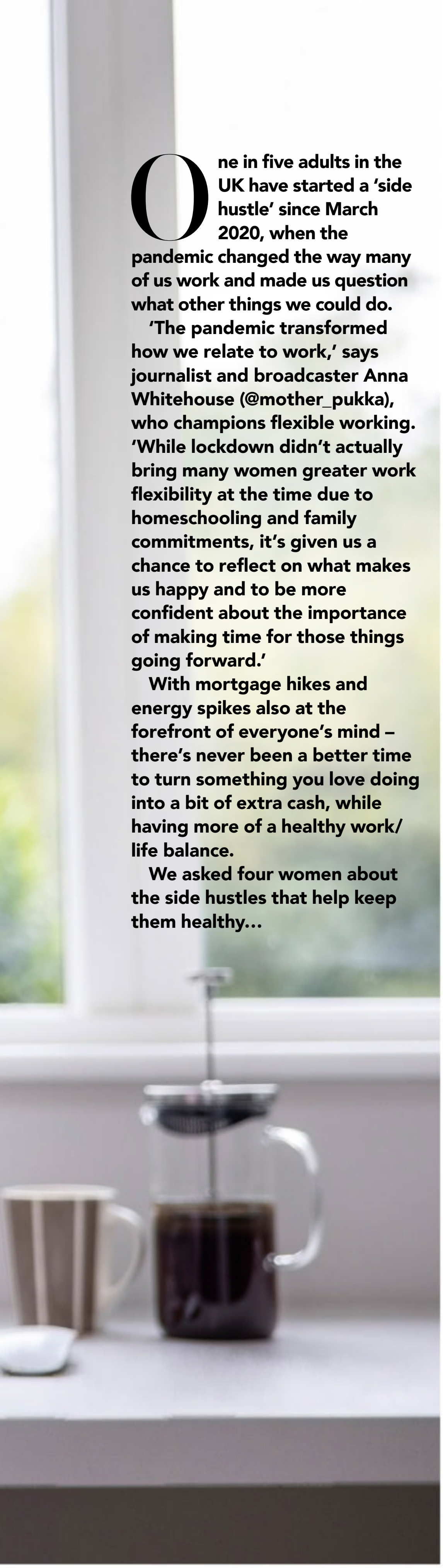
This month we're all about finding ways to navigate the challenges of life. Whether that's overcoming the stresses of a relationship, using alternative approaches – such as hypnotism – to heal, or simply giving ourselves a break when we're about to feel grumpy. But we begin with wise words from four women with money-spinning side hustles to make them happier, healthier and richer!

PHOTO: GETTY



Do the HUSTLE!

Four readers reveal how their 'bit on the side' jobs have boosted their health, their happiness and their bank balance



One in five adults in the UK have started a 'side hustle' since March 2020, when the pandemic changed the way many of us work and made us question what other things we could do.

'The pandemic transformed how we relate to work,' says journalist and broadcaster Anna Whitehouse (@mother_pukka), who champions flexible working. 'While lockdown didn't actually bring many women greater work flexibility at the time due to homeschooling and family commitments, it's given us a chance to reflect on what makes us happy and to be more confident about the importance of making time for those things going forward.'

With mortgage hikes and energy spikes also at the forefront of everyone's mind – there's never been a better time to turn something you love doing into a bit of extra cash, while having more of a healthy work/ life balance.

We asked four women about the side hustles that help keep them healthy…

'Pottering about with clay has made me happy'

Mum of one JULIA DREHER, 55, from East London, dabbles in teaching pottery

Julia teaching pottery to her friend's children at her studio

'When I look back to where I was – both physically and mentally – just four years ago, it's like looking at a different person. A nightmare year left me a shell of myself, but then a part-time pottery course turned everything around.

I refer to 2018 as my *annus horribilis* because it was absolutely wretched. My 25-year career as a successful design manager ended abruptly when I was made redundant just after I was diagnosed with cancer. I closed the year in the throes of a chemo-induced menopause. So when a friend suggested a 12-week pottery course to take my mind off things, I felt it could be the positive distraction I needed. I wasn't wrong.

Walking into that pottery class on the first day was kind of an epiphany. Having specialised with ceramics during my art degree, it felt familiar and comfortable – all the things that the past year hadn't been. Sitting with the clay gave me a sense of belonging and a realisation that I had come home.

It took me a long time to recover from the chemotherapy sessions, but the pottery really helped. Working with clay is incredibly therapeutic as it's tactile, slow and considered. It allowed me time to sit and think, be alone and be mindful. Taking time to create something beautiful gave me a sense of achievement that boosted my confidence at a time when I so desperately needed it.

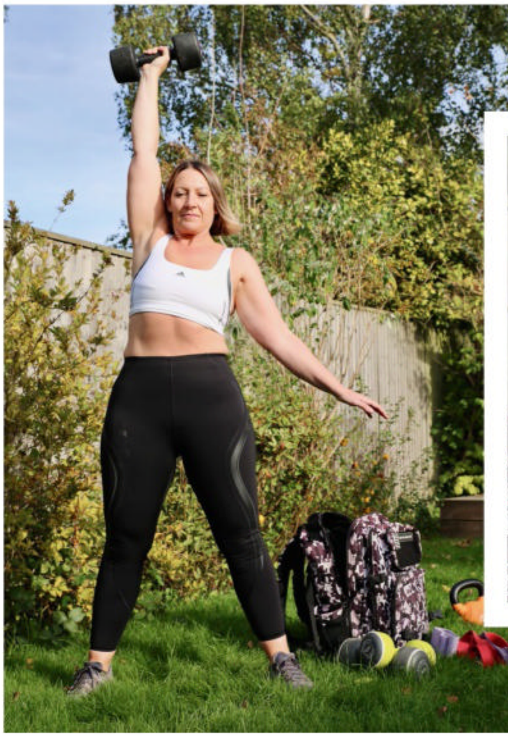
When I started to think of returning to work I knew I couldn't go back to the rat race. I'd loved my full-time job but it was exhausting – lots of hectic deadlines and overseas trips that took me away from my young son, Joe. Having had time to pause, I asked myself – how did I spin all those plates for so long? Was it worth it?

I wanted to continue this slower, more considered pace of life so I started to think about sharing my pottery skills with others, so they could benefit too. I invested my redundancy money into building a small studio in my garden and have recently started to welcome students, young and old, to explore the medium of clay.

I've shown seven-year-olds how to make pinch pots and I'd love to work with the local old people's homes, making it accessible to everyone. But most days I just potter about in my studio, cup of tea in hand, often still in pyjamas. It's so liberating.

The past few years have made me totally re-evaluate what's important. Being a single parent I have financial commitments, but I'm not in this to make heaps of money. I've realised what's most important is allowing myself to take time on the things that make me happy – and this truly does.'

✢ **Wansteadpottery.com >>**



'In my spare time I keep myself and others strong'

Journalist LOUISE BENNETT, 45, from Tunbridge Wells, is a part-time personal trainer

'I started properly thinking about my own fitness and wellbeing eight years ago when my second daughter was about nine months old. I'd spent three years being a mum and wanted to take back control of my body and own time. Today, I'm a fully qualified personal trainer using my down time to help others do the same – and loving every sweaty second.

> 'I'm a fully qualified PT and I love every second'

It began with running, which was easy to slot in around the kids, and I quickly noticed the benefits; my energy levels increased and mentally, I felt lighter. I'd recently taken a new position in London, editing health and fitness stories, so my interest in exercise coincided with getting to try new workouts and classes.

I needed to find personal trainers to give me a quote or expert advice for the articles, so I thought – why don't *I* get a PT qualification and become my own expert? Not only would I get to train in something I loved, it would also give me an additional skill should I ever find myself out of work.

The course was intense but after three months, just as we entered lockdown, I was a qualified PT. Suddenly gyms were shut and people were stuck at home so, to help out the community and keep up morale, I offered to do a few online sessions for my local WI group. And then, as we came out the other side of the pandemic, it just snowballed. People kept asking if I'd train them and I thought, why not?

I work Monday to Thursday at my day job so on my 'day off' I'll do about three or four training sessions, and it's the highlight of my week. By the time I pick the kids up from school I'm buzzing with endorphins.

The first client I ever took on has MS, uses a wheelchair and, to be honest, I had no idea where to begin. But we've worked it out together and tailored her sessions accordingly. She called me the other day to say that she'd managed to reach the top shelf in Tesco and was elated. I can't tell you how rewarding that is.

I also managed to sort out my 79-year-old mum's sciatica, meaning she could return to day trips and see friends. Having the ability to enhance her quality of life means everything.

Recently, I was put forward for another editing job but the money wasn't great. For the first time ever I felt confident to say that I was worth more, because I knew that I could walk away, with my training to fall back on. My side hustle has given me that confidence, and it feels great.'

'Creativity keeps my hands busy and mind sharp'

NIKKI MORRIN, 61, from Hertfordshire, is never far from a ball of wool

'Making things is a bit of an obsession for me. I started crocheting and knitting in my early teens and quickly it became "my thing", turning out to be way more than just a bit of crafting. The challenge of working out patterns, and seeing ideas through, keeps my mind active and if I didn't do it I'd feel quite lost.

As a child I always saw both of my grans knitting and crocheting, plus my mum is a talented painter – so I was surrounded by creative women. It was when Mum promised to knit me a jumper when I was about 13 that I first picked up a pair of knitting needles. It was taking her so long to do, I thought I may as well learn and finish it myself!

Since that moment, I haven't been without needles or a crochet hook. As a young adult, being able to create something completely original to wear was a way I could express myself – and by taking time to make bespoke gifts, I could show my love for other people.

It's also kept me company. My husband Phil used to work late a lot

Two examples of Nikki Morrin's handmade garments

– but there was always something to crochet or knit to fill my time in the evenings when our girls were in bed.

Now our daughters have left home, making things keeps me busy and connected to the local community. I'll take my things down to the village hall for the makers' market every month; I never make much money, but I love to be surrounded by other creative people and catch up with the locals.

Creating things keeps my mind active. Whether it's counting stitches or following patterns, working out how I can recreate things on Pinterest, or upcycling charity shop finds with patches of knitting and crochet; it holds my attention and keeps me thinking. You'll always find me with a project on the go and half of my suitcase is taken up with balls of wool whenever we go on holiday!

I handmake all Christmas and birthday presents, but these days I tend to ask people what they'd like beforehand to save any embarrassing reactions. One of the most special things I've made was a fluffy hat for my mum, knitted with the fur of her beloved white long-haired Alsatian who had passed away. I'd bought a spinning wheel so I could spin the collected fur into yarn – something which I now do with local sheep and alpaca wool.

I love to give people presents that money can't buy. Mum was broken-hearted when her dog Piper died but now, in a way, she can still take her out on walks. Being able to make a gift like that is so good for the soul.'

+ Find out more by searching 'Laurelliecraft' on Facebook

WORDS: SAMANTHA WOOD. PHOTOS: GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP.

'I'm using my menopause journey to help other women'

Nursery owner MEERA BHOGAL, 53, from Hertfordshire, runs a health and wellbeing business from home

'Menopause night sweats and brain fog made me consider giving up the full-time job I loved, but in taking the time to understand my symptoms I now run a wellness sideline helping other women through it too.

I've been the boss of a children's nursery for 20 years and really enjoy my work. But when I started to experience menopause symptoms in my early 40s, the sweaty, sleepless nights meant I constantly felt shattered and I struggled to get to work on time.

> 'I constantly felt shattered and struggled to get to work'

I didn't know anything about menopause, I was totally uneducated and certainly didn't expect it to be happening at my age. It began with a few isolated symptoms – some hair loss, a few aches and pains and a bit of anxiety – but morphed into a beast; debilitating periods making it impossible to leave the bathroom before leaking through my clothes.

But it wasn't until I was at my regular yoga class, in tears over being unable to touch my toes because everything hurt, that my yoga teacher suggested I might be perimenopausal. I went home and did a load of research on menopause and began to join the dots.

I decided to tweak my lifestyle and create my own coping strategies, and as I found things that helped, I wanted to share that with other women – so began to blog about it.

I've always been interested in food (I've been gluten and dairy intolerant for years), so I researched how I could manage my symptoms through diet. I stripped it back to basics, cutting out certain foods and drinks that made me feel worse and concentrating on those that promote good gut health. I also drank litres of bone broth as I read about how good it was for you. After a few weeks I couldn't believe the difference it made to my skin, hair and the way I felt.

My husband and I had started making broths, herbal teas and fermented foods at home, so I thought why not sell these too? So that's how Meera's Made From Scratch was born. I also started a menopause policy at the nursery, delivered to every member of my staff.

Now I'll do long hours at the nursery and then come home and start cooking organic venison bones to make broth to send out, but I'm determined to make a difference and raise awareness for others. As long as I can help other women feel supported, I'll keep doing it.'

+ meerasmadefromscratch.co.uk

A revitalised Meera on the yoga mat and in the kitchen

Who do you think YOU ARE?

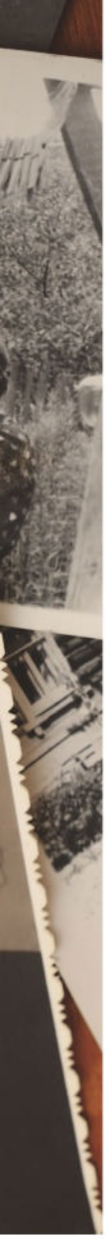
Could channeling your past bring positives to your current life?

Ever wondered if you've had a past life? According to regression therapist Mark Wentworth, you're likely to have had multiple. And they could be affecting things today.

For many, this is all a tad 'woo woo'. But, according to Mark, you don't have to believe in reincarnation to reap personal benefits. 'It's not about proving or disproving, it's about allowing your imagination to wander, exploring what comes up and seeing where that takes you,' he says.

'Our past lives can help and hinder our current one in many different ways,' says Mark, who likens them to programmes left open on a computer, always running in the background. 'Sometimes unfinished business from the past can be holding us back, so by "defragging" our internal hard drives and assessing the stored data, we can make sense of feelings and scenarios that are playing out today. Your past lives have given you a wealth of banked experience that can be brought forward into this life – all you have to do is tap into it.'

WORDS: SAMANTHA WOOD. PHOTOS: GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP.



TAPPING INTO HISTORY

Those with vivid imaginations are thought of as 'storytellers' – but who's to say there's not something in those stories? 'Imaginations are powerful,' says Mark, reasoning that everything once began as an imagined concept. 'I believe that if you let yourself *imagine* the story of your past life, there's a chance you'll actually be remembering something. Because, out of the billions of scenarios you *could* have come up with – why *that* specific one? Maybe it's your soul doing the storytelling.'

While hypnotherapy is one way to connect with past lives, Mark says you can try it at home with this simple exercise:

1 IMAGINE YOUR CHARACTER

Sit quietly and let your mind imagine a time in history, before your birth. Take note of what comes instantly; the country, the period, the surroundings. Now imagine a person in this scenario. Ask yourself:

✢ Are they male or female?
✢ What do they look like?
✢ What are they doing?

Now, like a scriptwriter, flesh out what their life might be like. What do you imagine?

✢ Do they have family?
✢ Are they working?
✢ What things have happened to them?

Now press the 'forward' button on their life, stopping it every so often. What is their story?

✢ What major life events have occurred?
✢ How does their life end?
✢ Did they feel fulfilled?

This character could represent your past life; bring them to life and get to know them. Of course, you could have just imagined something that you've seen in a film or read in a book – but, ask yourself, out of thousands of options, why did you choose that one?

ASK YOUR PAST 'YOU' FOR HELP

Past lives aren't always a hindrance, you might gain strengths from them too. 'Tap into their resources and you can uncover a heap of abilities you never knew you had,' says Mark. 'If you imagine you lived a fulfilled life, think of your past self as a mentor, when you're facing a tricky situation, think how they might have overcome it.'

2 JOIN THE DOTS WITH YOUR CURRENT LIFE

Now think of how those life experiences may have 'rubbed off' on your life, like an actor who finds it hard to detach from a part. For example, can you see parallels with your anxiety about providing for your family and your imagined Dickensian housewife never being able to make ends meet? Or perhaps your imagined husband's infidelity shines a light on your current trust issues? 'Looking at your two lives in this way can highlight why things might be holding you back,' says Mark. 'You might suddenly be able to understand struggles, worries and triggers more clearly and move past them by working on healing these past traumas.'

3 DO SOMETHING TO HONOUR THEM

According to Mark, often the things that hold us back are caused by our past selves feeling unfulfilled. Something in their story remains unfinished, but we can help complete it for them by identifying what support they may have benefited from and nourishing them. 'Ask yourself what *they* would have needed to feel more whole. Whether that's a night off cooking, an hour to have their nails done or a weekend away from responsibilities – then give yourself exactly that, but in honour of them.'

Mark says that people who keep in mind their past lives and do things to show that character kindness, love and compassion are more likely to live a fulfilled life now – which will, in turn, benefit our future lives after this one.

PAST LIVES ARE CHILD'S PLAY

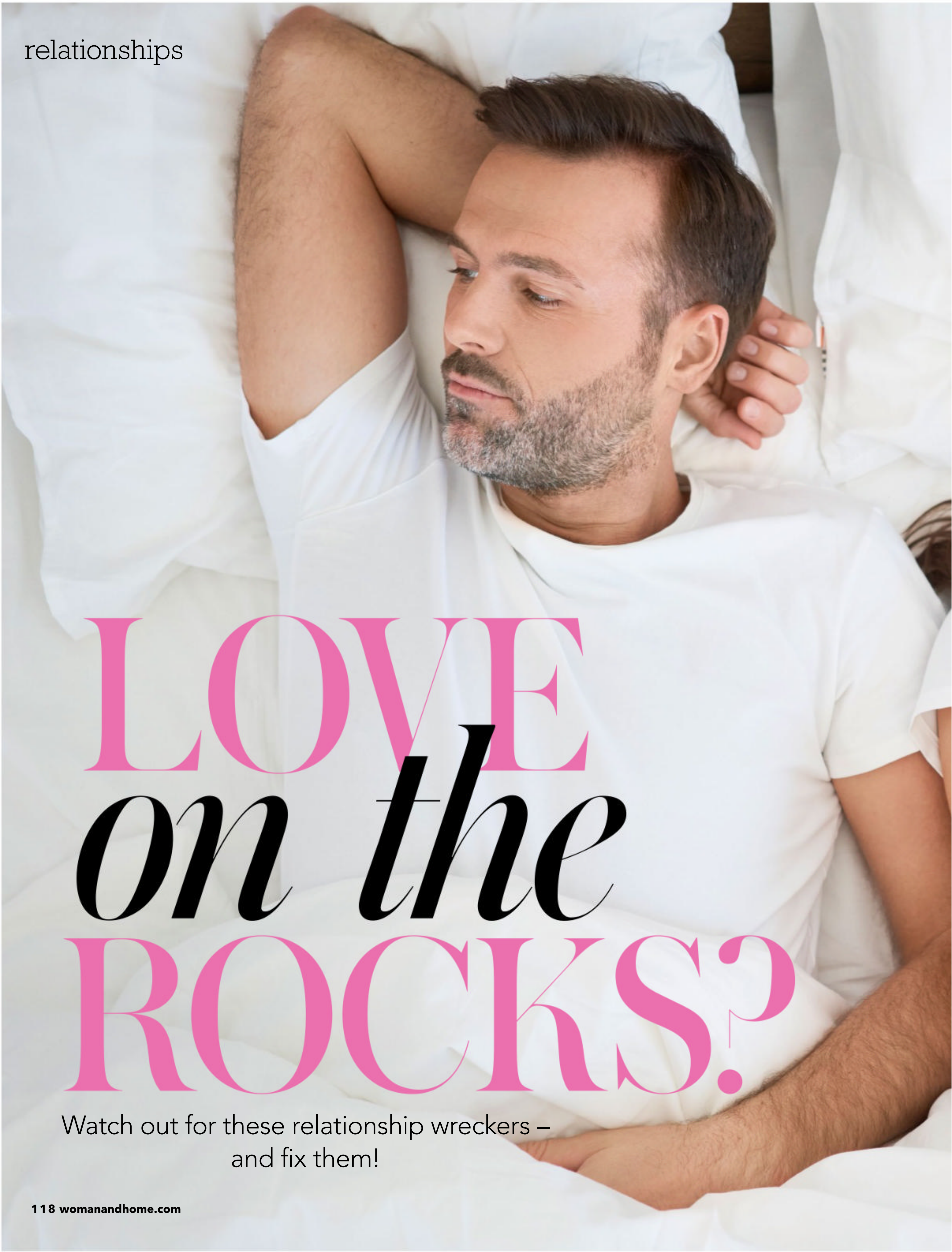
Ever met a child who seems wiser than their years, a bit like an 'old soul'? Many researchers – including psychiatrist Carl Jung – have reported that children under five are the most intune with their past lives and will often recount things they remember. As they age, a veil descends over these memories, which might be nature's way of protecting them.

HONOUR YOUR PAST LIVES

Take a moment to be in tune with your past self, your present self and your future self with this simple candle ritual. Pausing to give your different selves space and consideration can help them come together. You will need three candles.

✢ Think of your past self, the character you imagined. Light the first candle and think of what you would heal for them.
✢ Think of your current life, the person you are now. Light the second candle in honour of where you are in your life now.
✢ Think of your future. Light the third candle while manifesting the fulfilment you wish to feel.

✢ To find out more about Mark's workshops, including ones on colour therapy, visit colourforlife.com



LOVE *on the* ROCKS?

Watch out for these relationship wreckers – and fix them!

We're all guilty of being hard to live with occasionally, and there are often good reasons – we're sick, tired or stressed. But romantic relationships are based on mutual support, however long you've been with someone. And, when you're not holding up your end of the bargain, you're in danger of jeopardising something you love.

'Relationships can be complicated, and one that's stagnant where one or both parties aren't actively putting in an effort is one that urgently needs some TLC,' says counsellor, author and broadcaster Anna Williamson. Here are some 'relationship wreckers' to watch out for in ourselves (and our partners), and how to fix them.

DISRESPECT

Scoff at your partner's jokes? Pull them up in public? Tut when they mention their hobby? These seemingly innocent acts can be humiliating. 'It can be rolling your eyes when your partner speaks, or talking over them,' says psychologist Dr Audrey Tang, author of The Leader's Guide to Resilience (£14.99, Pearson). 'Perhaps they're the butt of your jokes – even if you "didn't mean any harm" – then, if they call out your behaviour, you refuse to acknowledge it.'

WHAT TO DO: Constantly finding fault damages a partner's self-esteem and your relationship. 'We're programmed to focus on the negative, which means we have to work harder to find the positives,' explains Anna. 'Be wary of highlighting the negatives in your partner.' Instead, focus on what's good, such as they're a great parent, hard-working or caring.

STONEWALLING

Rebuffing attempts to talk can damage a relationship, as can withholding concerns. Although you could be feeling down or distracted, it's best not to make a habit of it. 'You may not feel like talking, or may be used to doing things alone,' says Dr Tang. 'But a refusal to discuss anything is detrimental to a healthy relationship.'

WHAT TO DO: 'This isn't easily overcome without communication,' says Dr Tang. 'Couples need to communicate their needs rather than demand or assume they'll be met.' Couples therapy can help – try relate.org.uk

BAD HABITS

Most of us start relationships with the best of intentions but, over time, bad habits form. 'When we're in long-term relationships, we'll have wired our brain's neural pathways to behave in certain ways with our partner,' says Dr Tang. >>

DID YOU KNOW?

Sexually active Brits are having less sex than before, especially those who are married or cohabiting*.

'Just as we build habits, we also build habits in relationships – therefore, if we start to pick up habits, such as withdrawing when times are hard, it's likely that these will become the norm.'

WHAT TO DO: If you suspect that you've become lazy or moody, but you managed these flaws early in your relationship, think about making some changes. 'It will take a conscious effort to create new habits and ways of being with each other,' says Dr Tang, so you'll have to make an effort. It takes around 10 weeks to form a new habit and up to eight months to break one**, but it's worth persisting.

TIME POOR

Quantity is not quality. Watching TV in bed together or staring at phones on the sofa isn't time spent wisely. 'It can be easy to forget that the most important person is right in front of us due to the familiarity of being around each other,' says Anna.

WHAT TO DO: Carve out time to keep the relationship alive. Take a moment to cuddle every day and organise date nights and shared activities outside the home.

SO SIMPLE

Something as easy as making a cup of tea for your partner makes them feel valued, found the Enduring Love? study.

SUPPRESSING DISCONTENT

You may do this when you don't want to discuss something that's upsetting or could cause a row. But this passive-aggressive behaviour chips away at even solid partnerships.

WHAT TO DO: If you often say 'I'm fine' when you're not, then you're not fine! 'Ask yourself "How am I really feeling?",' says Dr Tang. 'Until we're able to unpack emotions we suppress into the "fine" box, we may not realise that they can be easily addressed, or perhaps weren't even related to our relationship.'

SELF-NEGLECT

You haven't had your hair done in months, you can't be bothered to exercise, and your underwear is fraying at the seams. Lack of self-care can contribute to low self-esteem and have a knock-on effect on relationships.

WHAT TO DO: Are you depressed, worried about money, or menopausal? Have a think about why you're down on yourself and how it's harming your relationship (you don't want sex, for example, because you're unhappy with your body). Then take steps to change – eg exercise, a makeover, therapy, or daily positive affirmations.

REPEATING HISTORY

Often, the power dynamics we display in our relationships were learned from what we witnessed growing up. Because it's what we know, we convince ourselves that our behaviour is OK. 'When we're in long-term relationships, we may be relating to the subconscious patterns we learnt from our parents/caretakers,' says Dr Tang. 'This means we may repeat patterns which resemble "giving up", such as not cleaning up, not making an effort, and not discussing issues – as these have been the ways our parents/caretakers modelled love.'

WHAT TO DO: Unless we consciously choose to reflect on our behaviour, we're likely to repeat patterns, warns Dr Tang. Think about how you were brought up. For example, if you can't let things go, or you don't give your partner space, consider what you were exposed to at a young age – did your mum belittle your dad? Was your dad possessive? This will help you recognise your own problematic behaviour.

STOP BEING YOUR OWN HOME-WRECKER

Relationship coach Madalaine Munro explains how to restore and maintain a good rapport with your partner...

1 **CHECK IN** Regularly set aside time to share what's working for you and what isn't. Say what you're grateful for and what you love about each other. Decide on a course of action for whenever arguments get heated, such as taking time out.

2 **BE OPEN** How can we create the relationship we want if we aren't honest with our partner?

When discussing matters, try the Imago technique:

MIRROR Repeat their needs so they feel heard.

VALIDATE Say you understand, or what they're saying makes sense.

EMPATHISE Put yourself in your partner's shoes. Don't just think about what they're going through; try to feel it.

3 **BE INTIMATE** Prioritise intimacy – not just sex but dinners out, cuddles or a shared hobby.

4 **GET HELP** Professional support can help people become aware of their actions or behaviour and provide invaluable advice.

IS SEX THE ISSUE?

Avoiding intimacy without an explanation can bruise your partner's confidence and undermine your connection. Here are some reasons why women avoid sex.

You're menopausal

The symptoms of menopause can be a real passion killer. 'Women may feel more irritable, anxious or sad, which can cause arguments over trivial things,' says Pippa Murphy, sex and relationship expert at condoms.uk. This, in turn, prevents closeness.

WHAT TO DO: Be honest with your partner – explain your symptoms and ask them to be patient. Don't expect them to second-guess what you're going through; instead, get help. Your GP may prescribe HRT or suggest alternatives, and there are many positive lifestyle changes you can make. See menopauseandme.co.uk for advice.

You're tired

Tiredness and fatigue can also add to bedroom woes. If you're always busy during the day, you could feel too exhausted to get frisky. 'Some women have other things on their mind that take up their time,' says Pippa. 'They may have family members who need help – this can cause a woman to feel overwhelmed and not want to have sex as much as her partner.'

WHAT TO DO: Yes, you feel shattered but repeatedly rejecting your partner can cause tension. Their needs also matter, so say you love them and offer affection instead. 'If you're going through a dry spell, it may feel like initiating touch is an impossible task, so focus on smaller acts such as holding hands, kissing and hugging,' advises Pippa.

You've lost your confidence

Lots of us struggle with the effects of menopause, age or weight gain. 'Many women feel less attractive as their bodies have changed in ways they don't like, so they may look for signs of rejection from their partner that aren't always there,' says Pippa. This self-doubt can cause us to push our partner away.

WHAT TO DO: Ask your partner what they find sexy about you, says Pippa. It's probably your smile, laugh, eyes or legs – not your shape. If you're unhappy with your weight, tackle it head on. The NHS-backed Second Nature app (secondnature.io) is a great motivator.

You don't get what you want in bed

Feeling like your love life has become boring or formulaic, or that your partner is prioritising their sexual needs over yours can trigger resentment, which can start rows. 'The problem is that many women get bored with their partner's technique. And most women need more than just sex to feel good,' says Pippa.

WHAT TO DO: Your partner is probably blissfully unaware that you're frustrated, so it's up to you to take control rather than withdraw sexual contact. Pippa suggests this: 'If you feel that your partner rushes, ask them to slow down. Spend time touching them and if they try to touch you, slap their hand and tell them you're in charge for the time being. That way, you can take things at your own pace.'

WORDS: DEBRA WATERS AND TANYA PEAREY. PHOTOS: GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. *NATIONAL SURVEYS OF SEXUAL ATTITUDES AND LIFESTYLES. **2009 STUDY BY PHILLIPPA LALLY

When GRUMPY is GOOD!

Feeling gloomy? Not looking on the bright side of life can actually have its benefits

We've all had a lot to deal with over the last few years – and for many, life may still be an uphill struggle. You might find yourself feeling fine one minute, only to be riddled with anxiety the next. This is all pretty normal, but it can be debilitating, so it's important to recognise and accept your thoughts and feelings – even the worst ones, says clinical therapist Kate Morris-Bates, founder of InsideOut Wellness.

We'd all love to be cheerful 100% of the time, but that's not realistic. What is possible, however, is reframing negative emotions. Let's not forget that if we didn't experience low times, we'd never fully appreciate the highs.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

It's hard to admit to envy, but research suggests feeling jealous could help to improve friendships – it motivates us to nurture our bonds*.

SADNESS BOOSTS MEMORY

A study by the University of California found that on rainy days, people had a much better recollection of details compared to sunny days where their memory was less accurate. 'Moods that are associated with negative emotions tend to be more attentive, thoughtful and analytical than their positive counterparts,' explains Kate. 'Research has shown that we are less likely to "corrupt our memories with misleading information" when we are in a less than good mood.'

STRESS SPURS YOU ON

'Cortisol is the hormone commonly used to measure stress. Typically, raised cortisol, or the symptoms of it, serve as a wake-up call for individuals to change habits which are not serving them and find ways of reducing their stress levels,' explains Kate. 'The key is to harness cortisol-driven stress and anxiety and use it to your advantage.

Practising meditation and mindfulness is one way to do this, as it helps to induce a heightened state of awareness. 'Think of it as a form of personal mental hygiene. It's a learned skill that must be practised regularly to exert effect,' says Kate. Search YouTube for free, guided meditations.

NEGATIVITY BRINGS FOCUS

If we're too optimistic there's a chance we can leave ourselves open to danger. 'If a situation presents significant risk, then a pessimist is far more likely to look for the worst that can happen,' says Kate. Always check in with your responses to a situation, she suggests. 'Then assess whether you are using your optimism or pessimism to best effect.'

ANGER LEADS TO ACTION

A certain amount of fury is part of our 'fight or flight' survival response and, when channelled correctly, can be a force for positive change. 'Feelings are not problems; they are normal responses to situations. The trick is to understand the response and the reason behind the emotion,' says Kate.

+ HOW TO HANDLE YOUR ANGER

Rather than resisting it, be open to the emotion, using it for insights into the triggers that are making you angry. You can then work to improve your response, making sure it's not simply hot-headed or irrational. One way of doing this is to keep a journal. Every time you feel a burst of rage bubbling, write down your feelings in whatever form comes to you – single words, full sentences or even simple drawings or doodles. This allows you to be true to your feelings and will help you to understand them better.

*JOURNAL OF PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP.

PHOTO: GETTY

THREE WAYS TO OWN YOUR FEELINGS

Kate shares her top tips for handling those difficult emotions

1 APPRECIATE THE GOOD TIMES

Try to be more flexible in your approach to your feelings. Allow yourself to savour positive emotions that arise – and equally consider any negative feelings you may have, to bring yourself an awareness of them.

2 ACCEPT YOURSELF

Validation is an effective way of communicating that you have accepted someone's emotional experience, whether or not you agree with it. If validation is not received, it can lead to feelings of isolation, rejection and shame. Rather than seeking validation from others, seek it from yourself.

3 PRIORITISE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

People often share how they're improving their physical wellbeing, but we rarely see what others do to boost their mental health when feeling exhausted, sad or anxious. Mental health is as important as physical health, so treat yours with the same respect.

Wild thing *or* *wallflower?*

What makes some people the life and soul of a party, while others avoid interaction?

Extroverts tend to feel energised when they are around other people – they're generally more sociable, talkative and outgoing. Introverts are quieter, more reserved and often feel the need to recharge alone after being around lots of people.

1 You're busy at work and a colleague is being overly chatty. You…

A Listen and nod politely, waiting for them to finish

B Listen half-heartedly and continue to work

C Schedule a coffee break later for a proper chat

D Interrupt and say sorry, but you're really busy

2 You've been in the dentist's waiting room for 40 minutes. You…

A Wait, flicking through endless magazines

B Simmer with anger, but stay tight-lipped

C Politely ask the receptionist when you'll be seen

D Talk loudly in frustration to other patients

3 A colleague is complaining aloud about a report you wrote. You…

A Just let them talk – no one else has complained

B Interrupt, saying you disagree with their criticism

C Ask if they'd like a private meeting to discuss it

D Tell them to pipe down, you're not interested

4 What is your biggest fear at dinner parties?

A Being asked to tell a funny story in front of others

B People talking in cliques and not including you

C People talking over you without listening properly

D People who stick to safe subjects and won't debate

5 You tell a joke at work but no one laughs. You…

A Just pretend it didn't happen

B Repeat the joke in case no one heard the first time

C Laugh loudly at it yourself

D Explain the joke to them

6 At a party, you have no idea what someone is talking about. You…

A Smile and nod along, feigning knowledge

B Excuse yourself from the conversation

C Apologise, and ask them to explain it to you

D Tell them you are in the dark about it

7 You're out with friends and a plus-one is quiet. You…

A Feel for them, but you're too nervous to go over

B Ignore them – they could make the effort

C Go and sit next to them and introduce yourself

D Keep smiling at them – they'll talk if they want to

HOW DID YOU SCORE?

MOSTLY As

INTROVERT

You hate interrupting people, even if you're busy or disagree with them. Practise speaking up, starting with something small. It's about looking out for yourself.

MOSTLY Bs

RUDELY INTROVERTED

You're introverted to the point of occasional rudeness. Bite your lip in situations you can't get out of, or apologise and make the excuse that you're needed elsewhere.

MOSTLY Cs

EXTROVERT

You're open, confident and form meaningful relationships. You listen carefully but will explain if you're busy – and you're not afraid to disagree politely. Others welcome your honest and caring attitude.

MOSTLY Ds

CAREFREE EXTROVERT

You speak your mind, exude confidence and look after number one. That's great, but there's a risk you could come across as arrogant or rude. Ask yourself if that's how you'd like to be spoken to?

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. PHOTO: GETTY

Your midlife BRAIN REWIRE

Hypnotherapy could be a way to help ease the symptoms of menopause

Want to deal with challenging menopause side effects? When used correctly, hypnotherapy can be a game changer – easing everything from stress, low self-esteem and sleeplessness to weight gain, hot flushes and chronic pain. Here's what you need to know.

HARNESS THE POWER

Hypnosis is a trance-like state of attention, says Helen Kelynack, a solution-focused hypnotherapist specialising in women's well-being. 'It reduces the functioning that makes us over analyse, and shuts off the brainwaves that frazzle our minds with inner chatter. Through repetition of roughly 12 sessions, hypnotherapy strengthens neural pathways and effectively rewires the brain – and the results can be life-changing.'

WHY IT WORKS

You can be perimenopausal and feel out of sorts for up to 10 years before going through the menopause, but hypnotherapy can help you to regain control. Try it for:

- **INSOMNIA** Do you often lie awake worrying? 'Hypnosis switches off the busy part of our brain and stops negative thought cycles, putting the body in a relaxed state to drop off,' explains Helen. Search YouTube for a free, guided sleep hypnosis.
- **WEIGHT LOSS** Studies show that hypnosis has helped women achieve weight loss, but don't expect to drop a dress size after just a few sessions. 'Hypnotherapy isn't a magic wand,' says Helen. 'It works by replacing a bad habit with a good one, so it could aid weight loss by changing an unhealthy relationship you have with food, or encouraging you to exercise more.'
- **ANXIETY** Oestrogen maintains our happy hormones. When levels decline, zest for life can be replaced by feelings of panic. 'During the menopause, the stress hormone cortisol rises, so we'll often be in a state of high alert with racing thoughts,' explains Helen.

  'Reducing stress is key, and hypnosis is effective, as it activates the prefrontal cortex – an amazing part of our brain involved in logical, rational and positive thinking. The result is feeling calmer after a session.'
- **BRAIN FOG** Struggling to cope with your job? You're not alone – 65% of women experiencing menopausal symptoms said they were less able to concentrate at work*. 'Women who've had amazing careers suddenly have breakdowns or close their businesses because they can no longer think clearly,' says Helen. 'Hypnosis can help you find focus and a positive perspective so you can deal with debilitating mind blanks.'
- **HOT FLUSHES** Hypnotherapy won't stop hot flushes but will help you get a handle on them, explains Helen. 'When you're hot and stressed, cortisol rises and you get panicky, self-conscious and the flush snowballs. Hypnotherapy helps you to control this reaction so you reduce the cortisol surge and cope with them better,' she says.

WANT TO GIVE IT A TRY?

While you can ask your GP about hypnotherapy, there might be a long waiting list. Instead, consider going private. The length of treatment will depend on what it is you're hoping to achieve, but you can expect to pay between £50-£100 per hour for an in-person session. YouTube also has a variety of free hypnosis videos. However, it is always recommended to see a professional who can tailor treatment specifically to your needs.

IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. PHOTO: GETTY

*CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF PERSONNEL AND DEVELOPMENT/YOUGOV

Sunshine ON TAP

A trip to the laid-back island of Barbados is sure to shake off the winter blues, says Jane Druker

WORDS: JANE DRUKER. PHOTOS: GETTY PRICES AND INFORMATION CORRECT AT TIME OF WRITING

One of the most glamorous and popular of the Caribbean islands, Barbados combines stunning beaches, lush scenery and hotels that have perfected the art of pampering their guests. The sun is always shining – and even if there's a tropical storm lasting a few short minutes, the locals refer to it as liquid sunshine! That sums up the optimistic and happy Bajan attitude to life. In fact, the people are so friendly, they genuinely want you to have a wonderful and joyful holiday experience.

ISLAND LIFE

Barbados is the most easterly of all the Caribbean islands and is just 21 miles long and 14 miles wide. Once a British colony (they still drive on the left here), the island gained independence in 1966 and is now headed by female president, Sandra Mason. Barbados also has an unofficial queen – local megastar Rihanna, who grew up on the edge of the capital Bridgetown.

For a small island there is plenty to do, from surfing on the rugged East Coast, to swimming with turtles in the gentle waters of the West Coast. To get a sense of the island, take a jeep safari tour, which is designed so you can see most of it within six hours – from the fishing village of Bathsheba in the east, and finishing in the bijou area of Sandy Lane in the west where Simon Cowell has a home, through bustling Bridgetown and back to the hotel. A very special part of our trip was seeing local race-horses swim in the sea just outside of Bridgetown on Pebbles Beach. Watching these majestic creatures in the water was breathtaking.

(Left) Bottom Bay. Views from the O2 Beach Club & Spa.

(Above) Colourful island houses. Swim with turtles.

RAISE A GLASS

Barbados perfected its rum on its sugarcane plantations during the 17th century, and it remains a cornerstone of the island's social life. Stop by any of the 1,500-plus roadside bars on the island for a taste or take a tour in one of the local distilleries. The cuisine is also wonderfully diverse, with Indian, English and African influences making food as spicy as you like. Don't miss flying fish with a side of cou cou (oatmeal with okra), chicken roti, or souse (pickled pork).

ALL-INCLUSIVE LUXURY

We stayed at the O2, which is elegant, sophisticated and for adults only. It has three small swimming pools, each with a swim-up bar, plus a powder-white private beach, where it's never too early to sip a cocktail. We had the difficult choice of picking one of the seven restaurants to dine in, with a huge range of choice, from Mexican to Bajan flavours, burgers and tapas. One of the most memorable meals we had was at Oro – the deeply glamorous, newly unveiled restaurant where we feasted on a multi-course Caribbean menu.

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

The hotel even arranged a morning painting session on the beach with local artist, Yasmin Vizcarrondo, who has lived on the island since 1998. What a treat this was! She taught me how to paint a canvas with just a cardboard piece the size of a credit card and a tableful of gloriously colourful paints. It was such a mindful experience, while sipping rose wine and hearing the sound of the waves. I cannot recommend it enough.

The final holiday highlight was the hugely enjoyable Cool Runnings catamaran trip to see the local turtles in their natural habitat. Such fun to snorkel, swim and sample the always-open bar. It summed up the whole trip – an adventure that opened me up to new experiences and one which calmed, relaxed and cocooned.

WHERE TO STAY

Ocean Hotels O2 Beach Club & Spa costs from £2,672 per person for 7 nights, on an all-inclusive basis, based on two adults sharing and includes return scheduled flights with Virgin Atlantic from London Heathrow. Virgin Atlantic Holidays or call 0344 557 3859.

✣ O2beachclubbarbados.com

✣ visitbarbados.org

6 of the best... SNOWY GETAWAYS

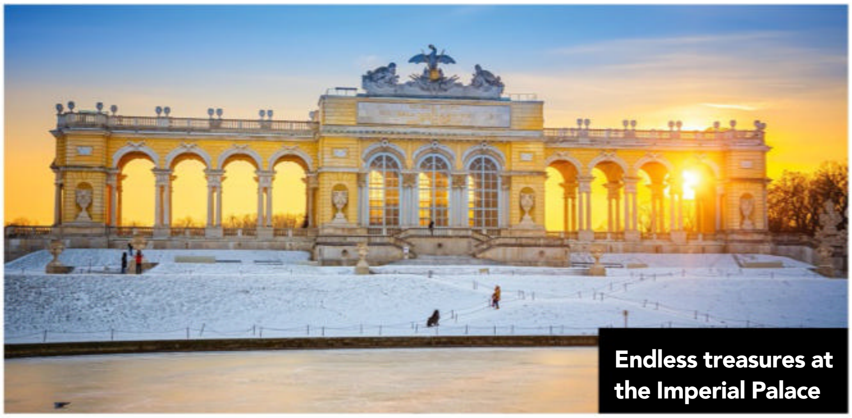
Embrace crisp chilly air and frosty vistas with a magical winter escape

See ice hotels or go dog-sledding in Levi

LAPLAND, FINLAND

Sparkling snowdrifts, hotels built from slabs of ice, dog-sledding adventures and zips down ski slopes – you'll get it all at Levi, 170km north of the Arctic Circle. At such lofty latitudes, winter days are short and cold, but with slow sunrises and sunsets that throw pinky hues across the landscape, the atmosphere is magical. Wrap up warm then head out on a guided snowshoeing expedition or cross-country ski. Return for a sauna, then nothing beats a plunge in an icy lake (trust us, you'll feel amazing afterwards). Visit the glass-ceilinged Utsu restaurant (leviniglut.net/restaurant-utsu) and watch the northern lights dance above your head while you dine.

✢ Where to Stay: Design Hotel Levi (designhotellevi.fi; doubles from approx £250 B&B) has rooms with local art and an excellent restaurant.



Endless treasures at the Imperial Palace

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

Ah Vienna! A city brimming with palaces, galleries and lashings of culture and cake. Dominating the city is the Imperial Palace of the Hapsburg dynasty and home to the Spanish Riding School. There are endless treasures here, notably the crown jewels and extravagant state apartments. At Belvedere Palace, you can see masterpieces including *The Kiss* by Klimt. Recoup with hot chocolate and strudel at Café Demel (demel.com/en/demel). Feeling active? Skate to the sounds of Strauss at Rathausplatz, or go to ThermeWien (thermewien.at/), a thermal pool complex.

✢ Where to stay: Boutique Hotel Donauwalzer (donauwalzer.at; rooms from approx £100), where breakfast buffets come with classical music at the weekend and there's also a spa.

MONTREUX, SWITZERLAND

Hunkered down around Lake Geneva, Montreux is great for combining alpine adventures with a cosmopolitan city. For skiers and boarders, the cog railway climbs from the city centre to over 1,600m at Rochers-de-Naye. Skiing not your thing? Imbibe mountain air on snowshoeing trails. A train hop away in Les Plèiades, warm up with mulled wine and fondue (myvaud.ch). Back in town, soak up the atmosphere at Steam on the Water (sauna-steam.ch), a sauna on the beach. Bliss.

✢ Where to stay: the Grand Hotel Swiss Majestic (marriott.com; rooms from approx £175) has a plum position opposite Montreux station and with lakeside

Mix adventure with city style in Montreux

Painted houses line the canal at Nyhavn

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

Copenhagen's beautiful architecture, superb museums and eateries oozing hygge make it a great winter destination. In Nyhavn, painted houses and cafes line the canal – be sure to enjoy coffee and a *kanelsnegle* (cinnamon bun) . Or take a covered boat trip with Hey Captain (heycaptain.dk). You'll get a fascinating commentary and there are blankets and hot chocolate to keep you cosy. The city is packed with museums and galleries and a Copenhagen Card (copenhagencard.com) covers most. Glyptoteket has an elegant winter garden so you can enjoy the outdoors indoors (its cafe, Picnic, overlooks the garden). Or try super-stylish Host restaurant.

✢ Where to stay: Kong Arthur has cosy rooms (arthurhotels.dk/hotel-kong-arthur; doubles from approx £105) a spa and a reception with a blazing fire.

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Budapest's architecture is awesome, from the Disneyesque turrets of the Fisherman's Bastion to the gothic Hungarian Parliament building. Art Nouveau designs are everywhere, most dramatically at the Postal Savings Bank (now State Treasury). Take a restorative dip at hot spring baths, such as Gellért, Széchenyi and Rudas – and stay cosy while the temperatures outside drop.

✢ Where to stay: Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace (fourseasons.com/; rooms from approx £350), is an Art Nouveau building beside the Danube.

Feel cosy in Budapest at a hot spring bath

Postcard-pretty Bryggen

BERGEN, NORWAY

Norway's second-largest city has a wintry charm all its own. Its UNESCO heritage-listed harbour area, Bryggen, is postcard-pretty. These 18th century wharves now bristle with shops and restaurants. A trip to Mount Floyen on the funicular (floyen.no/en/floibanen) provides panoramic views and is especially magical at night. Strike out from here on cross-country trails or walk back down to the city through Troll Forest. Winter is also the season to see natural wonders without the crowds. Top of the list is Naeroyfjord, a beautiful fjord and a world heritage listed site. And brave Stegastein viewpoint, which hangs off a mountainside, 650m above a fiord.

✢ Where to stay: Family-run Hotel Park Bergen (hotelpark.no; rooms from approx £125) has light, cosy interiors in an elegant 19th-century building.

WORDS: ALICIA MILLER, CHRIS MORLEY, SHARON SWEENEY. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY, MAUDE RION.
PRICES AND INFORMATION CORRECT AT TIME OF WRITING

MY FEEL GOOD SECRETS

JO WOOD

Model and entrepreneur Jo Wood, 67, lives in Northamptonshire. She has three grown-up children, two with ex-husband Ronnie Wood

My exercise routine...
Usually, I do Pilates once a week and weights and boxing twice a week. For the past six months I've only been doing Pilates as I've been recovering from an ankle operation. It's been tough, but I'm alright now. I can't wait to get back to boxing – and into heels!

My workout buddy...
I've got a great personal trainer called Christie Manning. She was an ex-kickboxing champion, so she's a good boxer.

My diet...
It's rare that I eat anything that's not organic. I will eat a bit of chicken once in a while, I love fish. I grow lots of veg in the garden and this year I've had so many tomatoes and apples. I know that what I put in my body will make me healthy or sick, so for me it's important I eat food that's not been processed or sprayed.

My beauty regime...
I always use organic coconut oil to take off my make-up. I've found an incredible product called Mother Dirt. You spray it on your face and it puts good bacteria back on your skin after you've washed your face.

My downtime...
I get out my sketch pad and research ideas for my wallpaper range. I also love to totter around in my vegetable garden.

My happy place...
At home in Northamptonshire. I live in an off-grid farmhouse, with my own solar-powered generator.

My favourite snack...
Celery with organic peanut butter. I love it. Organic chocolate and seaweed strips.

My ideal date night...
Dinner at River Cafe or my new favourite place, the restaurant at The Falcon Hotel in Castle Ashby, which is not far from me. So a nice candlelit dinner in a beautiful setting with organic food and, of course, the perfect man!

My friendships...
I love all my friends. I'm a good, caring friend, I always think I must check in on people. I think they all love me, too. I make sure I go and see them when I head into London.

My goal in life...
To turn the entire world organic! I know I'm aiming high, but I just feel we've come too far from what we should be. We need to reel it in and look at what we're doing to ourselves as human beings, to change the world to a better one.

+ Jo's new wallpaper range, created with close friend Katherine Trigg, is at jojoandtrixie.com. Shop her organic fragrance and skincare range at jowoodorganics.com

Jo eats mainly organic; with granddaughter Maggie

WORDS: ANNA MATHESON

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